

ADVENTURES WHILE PREACHING
THE GOSPEL OF BEAUTY

BY
NICHOLAS VACHEL LINDSAY

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2011 with funding from
The Institute of Museum and Library Services through an Indiana State Library LSTA Grant

Thomas J. Arbogast.
Springfield.
Illinois.

ADVENTURES WHILE PREACHING
THE GOSPEL OF BEAUTY

BY NICHOLAS VACHEL LINDSAY

GENERAL WILLIAM BOOTH
ENTERS INTO HEAVEN

ADVENTURES WHILE PREACHING
THE GOSPEL OF BEAUTY

ADVENTURES WHILE PREACHING
THE GOSPEL OF BEAUTY

NICHOLAS VACHEL LINDSAY

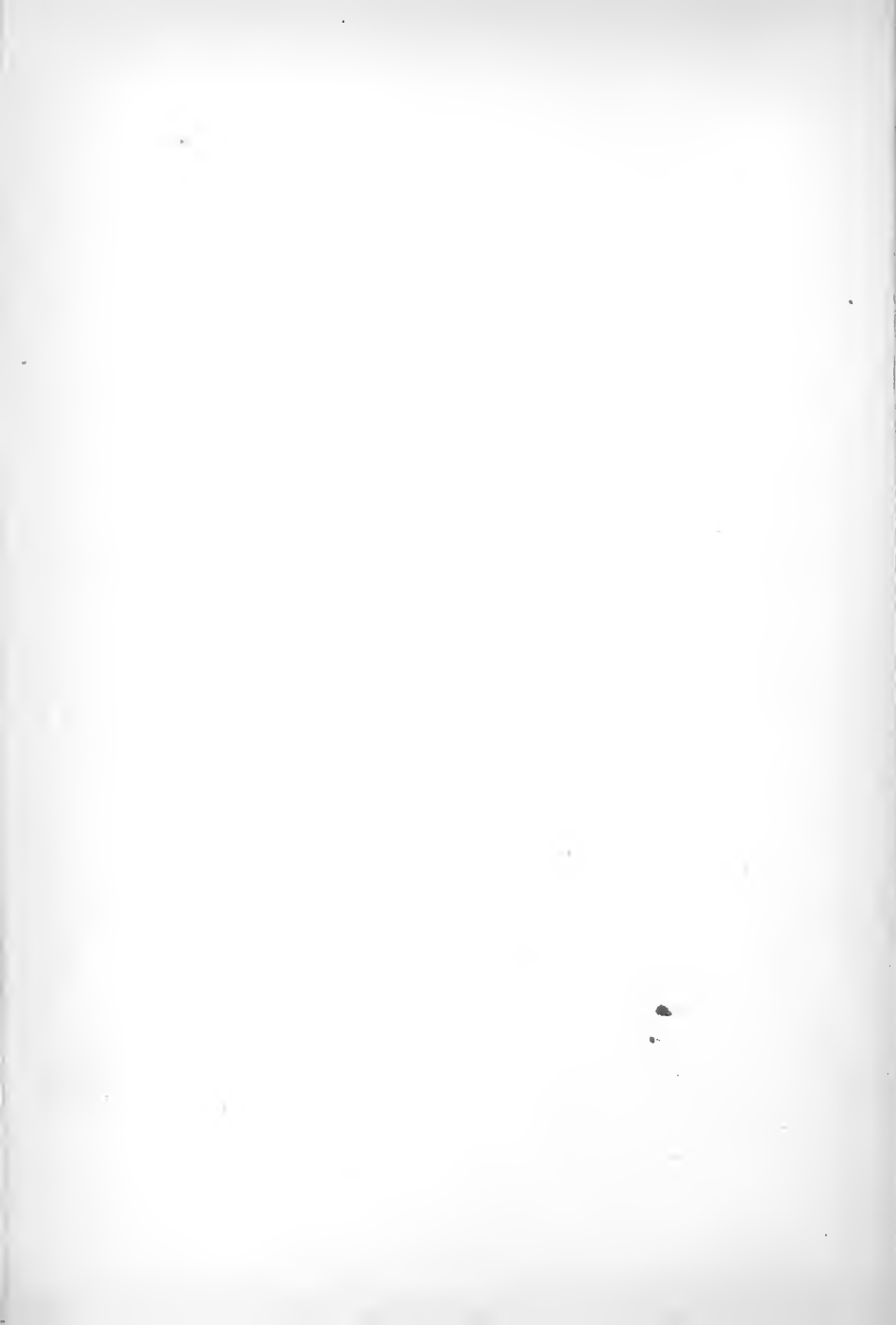


NEW YORK ✓ MITCHELL KENNERLEY 1914

COPYRIGHT 1914 BY
MITCHELL KENNERLEY

Printed in America

DEDICATED TO
MISS SARA TEASDALE



CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. I START ON MY WALK	9
II. WALKING THROUGH MISSOURI	36
III. WALKING INTO KANSAS	62
IV. IN KANSAS: THE FIRST HARVEST	101
V. IN KANSAS: THE SECOND AND THIRD HARVEST	127
VI. THE END OF THE ROAD; MOONSHINE; AND SOME PROCLAMATIONS	154

Thanks are due the Crowell Publishing Company for permission to reprint the proclamations from *Farm and Fireside* with which the book ends.

Adventures While Preaching the Gospel of Beauty

I

I Start on My Walk

AS some of the readers of this account are aware, I took a walk last summer from my home town, Springfield, Illinois, across Illinois, Missouri, and Kansas, up and down Colorado and into New Mexico. One of the most vivid little episodes of the trip, that came after two months of walking, I would like to tell at this point. It was in southern Colorado. It was early morning. Around the cliff, with a boom, a rattle and a bang, appeared a gypsy wagon. On the front seat was a Romany, himself dressed inconspicuously, but with his woman more bedecked

10 THE GOSPEL OF BEAUTY

than Carmen. She wore the bangles and spangles of her Hindu progenitors. The woman began to shout at me, I could not distinguish just what. The two seemed to think this was the gayest morning the sun ever shone upon. They came faster and faster, then, suddenly, at the woman's suggestion, pulled up short. And she asked me with a fraternal, confidential air, "What you sellin', what you sellin', boy?"

If we had met on the first of June, when I had just started, she would have pretended to know all about me, she would have asked to tell my fortune. On the first of June I wore about the same costume I wear on the streets of Springfield. I was white as paper from two years of writing poetry indoors. Now, on the first of August I was sun-burned a quarter of an inch deep. My costume, once so respectable, I had gradually transformed till it looked like that of a showman. I wore very yellow corduroys, a fancy sombrero and an oriflamme tie. So Mrs.

Gypsy hailed me as a brother. She eyed my little worn-out oil-cloth pack. It was a delightful professional mystery to her.

I handed up a sample of what it contained—my *Gospel of Beauty* (a little one-page formula for making America lovelier), and my little booklet, *Rhymes to Be Traded for Bread*.

The impatient horses went charging on. In an instant came more noises. Four more happy gypsy wagons passed. Each time the interview was repeated in identical language, and with the same stage business. The men were so silent and masterful-looking, the girls such brilliant, inquisitive cats! I never before saw anything so like high-class comic opera off the stage, and in fancy I still see it all:—those brown, braceleted arms still waving, and those provocative siren cries:—"What you sellin', boy? What you sellin'?"

I hope my Gospel did them good. Its essential principle is that one should not be

12 THE GOSPEL OF BEAUTY

a gypsy forever. He should return home. Having returned, he should plant the seeds of Art and of Beauty. He should tend them till they grow. There is something essentially humorous about a man walking rapidly away from his home town to tell all men they should go back to their birthplaces. It is still more humorous that, when I finally did return home, it was sooner than I intended, all through a temporary loss of nerve. But once home I have taken my own advice to heart. I have addressed four mothers' clubs, one literary club, two missionary societies and one High School Debating Society upon the Gospel of Beauty. And the end is not yet. No, not by any means. As John Paul Jones once said, "I have not yet begun to fight."

I had set certain rules of travel, evolved and proved practicable in previous expeditions in the East and South. These rules had been published in various periodicals before my start. The home town newspapers,

I START ON MY WALK 13

my puzzled but faithful friends in good times and in bad, went the magazines one better and added a rule or so. To promote the gala character of the occasion, a certain paper announced that I was to walk in a Roman toga with bare feet encased in sandals. Another added that I had travelled through most of the countries of Europe in this manner. It made delightful reading. Scores of mere acquaintances crossed the street to shake hands with me on the strength of it.

The actual rules were to have nothing to do with cities, railroads, money, baggage or fellow tramps. I was to begin to ask for dinner about a quarter of eleven and for supper, lodging and breakfast about a quarter of five. I was to be neat, truthful, civil and on the square. I was to preach the Gospel of Beauty. How did these rules work out?

The cities were easy to let alone. I passed quickly through Hannibal and Jef-

14 THE GOSPEL OF BEAUTY

ferson City. Then, straight West, it was nothing but villages and farms till the three main cities of Colorado. Then nothing but desert to central New Mexico. I did not take the train till I reached central New Mexico, nor did I write to Springfield for money till I quit the whole game at that point.

Such wages as I made I sent home, starting out broke again, first spending just enough for one day's recuperation out of each pile, and, in the first case, rehabilitating my costume considerably. I always walked penniless. My baggage was practically nil. It was mainly printed matter, renewed by mail. Sometimes I carried reproductions of drawings of mine, *The Village Improvement Parade*, a series of picture-cartoons with many morals.

I pinned this on the farmers' walls, explaining the mottoes on the banners, and exhorting them to study it at their leisure. My little pack had a supply of the aforesaid

Rhymes to Be Traded for Bread. And it contained the following Gospel of Beauty:

THE GOSPEL OF BEAUTY

Being the new "creed of a beggar" by that vain and foolish mendicant Nicholas Vachel Lindsay, printed for his personal friends in his home village—Springfield, Illinois. It is his intention to carry this gospel across the country beginning June, 1912, returning in due time.

I

I come to you penniless and afoot, to bring a message. I am starting a new religious idea. The idea does not say "no" to any creed that you have heard. . . . After this, let the denomination to which you now belong be called in your heart "the church of beauty" or "the church of the open sky." . . . The church of beauty has two sides: the love of beauty and the love of God.

II

THE NEW LOCALISM

The things most worth while are one's own hearth and neighborhood. We should make our own home and neighborhood the most democratic, the most beautiful and the holiest in the world. The children now growing up should become devout gardeners or architects or park architects or teachers of dancing in the Greek spirit or musicians or novelists or poets or story-writers or craftsmen or wood-carvers or dramatists or actors or singers. They should find their talent and nurse it industriously. They should believe in every possible application to art-theory of the thoughts of the Declaration of Independence and Lincoln's Gettysburg Address. They should, if led by the spirit, wander over the whole nation in search of the secret of democratic beauty with their hearts at the same time filled to

overflowing with the righteousness of God. Then they should come back to their own hearth and neighborhood and gather a little circle of their own sort of workers about them and strive to make the neighborhood and home more beautiful and democratic and holy with their special art. . . . They should labor in their little circle expecting neither reward nor honors. . . . In their darkest hours they should be made strong by the vision of a completely beautiful neighborhood and the passion for a completely democratic art. Their reason for living should be that joy in beauty which no wounds can take away, and that joy in the love of God which no crucifixion can end.

The kindly reader at this point clutches his brow and asks, "But why carry this paper around? Why, in Heaven's name, do it as a beggar? Why do it at all?"

Let me make haste to say that there has

18 THE GOSPEL OF BEAUTY

been as yet no accredited, accepted way for establishing Beauty in the heart of the average American. *Until such a way has been determined upon by a competent committee,* I must be pardoned for taking my own course and trying any experiment I please.

But I hope to justify the space occupied by this narrative, not by the essential seriousness of my intentions, nor the essential solemnity of my motley cloak, nor by the final failure or success of the trip, but by the things I unexpectedly ran into, as curious to me as to the gentle and sheltered reader. Of all that I saw the State of Kansas impressed me most, and the letters home I have chosen cover, for the most part, adventures there.

Kansas, the Ideal American Community! Kansas, nearer than any other to the kind of a land our fathers took for granted! Kansas, practically free from cities and industrialism, the real last refuge of the constitution, since it maintains the type of agri-

cultural civilization the constitution had in mind! Kansas, State of tremendous crops and hardy, devout, natural men! Kansas of the historic Santa Fé Trail and the classic village of Emporia and the immortal editor of Emporia! Kansas, laid out in roads a mile apart, criss-crossing to make a great checker-board, roads that go on and on past endless rich farms and big farm-houses, though there is not a village or railroad for miles! Kansas, the land of the real country gentlemen, Americans who work the soil and own the soil they work; State where the shabby tenant-dwelling scarce appears as yet! Kansas of the Chautauqua and the college student and the devout school-teacher! The dry State, the automobile State, the insurgent State! Kansas, that is ruled by the cross-roads church, and the church type of civilization! The Newest New England! State of more promise of permanent spiritual glory than Massachusetts in her brilliant youth!

20 THE GOSPEL OF BEAUTY

Travellers who go through in cars with roofs know little of this State. Kansas is not Kansas till we march day after day, away from the sunrise, under the blistering noon sky, on, on over a straight west-going road toward the sunset. Then we begin to have our spirits stirred by the sight of the tremendous clouds looming over the most interminable plain that ever expanded and made glorious the heart of Man.

I have walked in eastern Kansas where the hedged fields and the orchards and gardens reminded one of the picturesque sections of Indiana, of antique and settled Ohio. Later I have mounted a little hill on what was otherwise a level and seemingly uninhabited universe, and traced, away to the left, the creeping Arkansas, its course marked by the cottonwoods, that became like tufts of grass on its far borders. All the rest of the world was treeless and riverless, yet green from the rain of yesterday, and patterned like a carpet with the shadows

of the clouds. I have walked on and on across this unbroken prairie-sod where half-wild cattle grazed. Later I have marched between alfalfa fields where hovered the lavender haze of the fragrant blossom, and have heard the busy music of the gorging bumble bees. Later I have marched for days and days with wheat waving round me, yellow as the sun. Many's the night I have slept in the barn-lofts of Kansas with the wide loft-door rolled open and the inconsequential golden moon for my friend.

These selections from letters home tell how I came into Kansas and how I adventured there. The letters were written avowedly as a sort of diary of the trip, but their contents turned out to be something less than that, something more than that, and something rather different.

THURSDAY, MAY 30, 1912. In the blue grass by the side of the road. Somewhere west of Jacksonville, Illinois. Hot sun.

22 THE GOSPEL OF BEAUTY

Cool wind. Rabbits in the distance. Bumblebees near.

At five last evening I sighted my lodging for the night. It was the other side of a high worm fence. It was down in the hollow of a grove. It was the box of an old box-car, brought there somehow, without its wheels. It was far from a railroad. I said in my heart "Here is the appointed shelter." I was not mistaken.

As was subsequently revealed, it belonged to the old gentleman I spied through the window stemming gooseberries and singing: "John Brown's body." He puts the car top on wagon wheels and hauls it from grove to grove between Jacksonville and the east bank of the Mississippi. He carries a saw mill equipment along. He is clearing this wood for the owner, of all but its walnut trees. He lives in the box with his son and two assistants. He is cook, washerwoman and saw-mill boss. His wife died many years ago.

The old gentleman let me in with alacrity. He allowed me to stem gooseberries while he made a great supper for the boys. They soon came in. I was meanwhile assured that my name was going into the pot. My host looked like his old general, McClellan. He was eloquent on the sins of preachers, dry voters and pension reformers. He was full of reminiscences of the string band at Sherman's headquarters, in which he learned to perfect himself on his wonderful fiddle. He said, "I can't play slow music. I've got to play dance tunes or die." He did not die. His son took a banjo from an old trunk and the two of them gave us every worth while tune on earth: *Money Musk*, *Hell's Broke Loose in Georgia*, *The Year of Jubilee*, *Sailor's Hornpipe*, *Baby on the Block*, *Lady on the Lake*, and *The Irish Washerwoman*, while I stemmed gooseberries, which they protested I did not need to do. Then I read my own unworthy verses to the romantic and violin-stirred

24 THE GOSPEL OF BEAUTY

company. And there was room for all of us to sleep in that one repentant and converted box-car.

FRIDAY, MAY 31, 1912. Half an hour after a dinner of crackers, cheese and raisins, provided at my solicitation by the grocer in the general store and post-office, Valley City, Illinois.

I have thought of a new way of stating my economic position. I belong to one of the leisure classes, that of the rhymers. In order to belong to any leisure class, one must be a thief or a beggar. On the whole I prefer to be a beggar, and, before each meal, receive from toiling man new permission to extend my holiday. The great business of that world that looms above the workshop and the furrow is to take things from people by some sort of taxation or tariff or special privilege. But I want to exercise my covetousness only in a retail way, open and above board, and when I take bread from a man's

table I want to ask him for that particular piece of bread, as politely as I can.

But this does not absolutely fit my life. For yesterday I ate several things without permission, for instance, in mid-morning I devoured all the cherries a man can hold. They were hanging from heavy, breaking branches that came way over the stone wall into the road.

Another adventure. Early in the afternoon I found a brick farmhouse. It had a noble porch. There were marks of old-fashioned distinction in the trimmed hedges and flower-beds, and in the summer-houses. The side-yard and barn-lot were the cluck- ingest, buzzingest kind of places. There was not a human being in sight. I knocked and knocked on the doors. I wandered through all the sheds. I could look in through the unlocked screens and see every sign of present occupation. If I had chosen to enter I could have stolen the wash bowl or the baby-buggy or the baby's doll. The creamery

26 THE GOSPEL OF BEAUTY

was more tempting, with milk and butter and eggs, and freshly pulled taffy cut in squares. I took a little taffy. That is all I took, though the chickens were very social and I could have eloped with several of them. The roses and peonies and geraniums were entrancing, and there was not a watch dog anywhere. Everything seemed to say "*Enter in and possess!*"

I saw inside the last door where I knocked a crisp, sweet, simple dress on a chair. Ah, a sleeping beauty somewhere about!

I went away from that place.

SUNDAY, JUNE 1, 1912. By the side of the road, somewhere in Illinois.

Last night I was dead tired. I hailed a man by the shed of a stationary engine. I asked him if I could sleep in the engine-shed all night, beginning right now. He said "Yes." But from five to six, he put me out of doors, on a pile of gunny sacks on the grass. There I slept while the ducks

quacked in my ears, and the autos whizzed over the bridge three feet away. My host was a one-legged man. In about an hour he came poking me with that crutch and that peg of his. He said "Come, and let me tell your fortune! I have been studying your physiognifry while you were asleep!" So we sat on a log by the edge of the pond. He said: "I am the Seventh Son of a Seventh Son. They call me the duck-pond diviner. I forecast the weather for these parts. Every Sunday I have my corner for the week's weather in the paper here." Then he indulged in a good deal of the kind of talk one finds in the front of the almanac.

He was a little round man with a pair of round, dull eyes, and a dull, round face, with a two weeks' beard upon it. He squinted up his eyes now. He was deliberate. Switch engines were going by. He paused to hail the engineers. Here is a part of what he finally said: "You are a Child of Destiny." He hesitated, for he wanted

28 THE GOSPEL OF BEAUTY

to be sure of the next point. "You were born in the month of S-e-p-t-e-m-b-e-r. Your preference is for a business like clerking in a store. You are of a slow, *pigmatic* temperament, but I can see you are fastidious about your eating. You do not use tobacco. You are fond of sweets. You have been married twice. Your first wife died, and your second was divorced. You look like you would make a good spiritualist medium. If you don't let any black cats cross your track you will have good luck for the next three years."

He hit it right twice. I *am* a Child of Destiny and I *am* fond of sweets. When a prophet hits it right on essentials like that, who would be critical?

An old woman with a pipe in her mouth came down the railroad embankment looking for greens. He bawled at her "Git out of that." But on she came. When she was closer he said: "Them weeds is full of poison oak." She grunted, and kept work-

ing her way toward us, and with a belligerent swagger marched past us on into the engine-room, carrying a great mess of greens in her muddy hands.

There was scarcely space in that little shed for the engine, and it was sticking out in several places. Yet it dawned on me that this was the wife of my host, that they kept house with that engine for the principal article of furniture. Without a word of introduction or explanation she stood behind me and mumbled, "You need your supper, son. Come in."

There was actually a side-room in that little box, a side room with a cot and a cupboard as well. On the floor was what was once a rug. But it had had a long kitchen history. She dipped a little unwashed bowl into a larger unwashed bowl, with an unwashed thumb doing its whole duty. She handed me a fuzzy, unwashed spoon and said with a note of real kindness, "Eat your supper, young man." She patted me on the

30 THE GOSPEL OF BEAUTY

shoulder with a sticky hand. Then she stood, looking at me fixedly. The woman had only half her wits.

I suppose they kept that stew till it was used up, and then made another. I was a Child of Destiny, all right, and Destiny decreed I should eat. I sat there trying to think of things to say to make agreeable conversation, and postpone the inevitable. Finally I told her I wanted to be a little boy once more, and take my bowl and eat on the log by the pond in the presence of Nature.

She maintained that genial silence which indicates a motherly sympathy. I left her smoking and smiling there. And like a little child that knows not the folly of waste, I slyly fed my supper to the ducks.

At bedtime the old gentleman slept in his clothes on the cot in the kitchenette. He had the dog for a foot-warmer. There was a jar of yeast under the table. Every so often the old gentleman would call for the old lady to come and drive the ducks out, or

they would get the board off the jar. Ever and anon the ducks had a taste before the avenger arrived.

On one side of the engine the old lady had piled gunny-sacks for my bed. That softened the cement-floor foundation. Then she insisted on adding that elegant rug from the kitchen, to protect me from the fuzz on the sacks. She herself slept on a pile of excelsior with a bit of canvas atop. She kept a cat just by her cheek to keep her warm, and I have no doubt the pretty brute whispered things in her ear. Tabby was the one aristocratic, magical touch:—one of these golden coon-cats.

The old lady's bed was on the floor, just around the corner from me, on the other side of the engine. That engine stretched its vast bulk between us. It was as the sword between the duke and the queen in the fairy story. But every so often, in response to the old gentleman's alarm, the queen would come climbing over my feet in order to get

32 THE GOSPEL OF BEAUTY

to the kitchen and drive out the ducks. From where I lay I could see through two doors to the night outside. I could watch the stealthy approach of the white and waddling marauders. Do not tell me a duck has no sense of humor. It was a great game of tag to them. It occurred as regularly as the half hours were reached. I could time the whole process by the ticking in my soul, while presumably asleep. And while waiting for them to come up I could see the pond and a star reflected in the pond, the star of my Destiny, no doubt. At last it began to rain. Despite considerations of fresh air, the door was shut, and soon everybody was asleep.

The bed was not verminiferous. I dislike all jokes on such a theme, but in this case the issue must be met. It is the one thing the tramp wants to know about his bunk. That peril avoided, there is nothing to quarrel about. Despite all the grotesquerie of

that night, I am grateful for a roof, and two gentle friends.

Poor things! Just like all the citizens of the twentieth century, petting and grooming machinery three times as smart as they are themselves. Such people should have engines to take care of them, instead of taking care of engines. There stood the sleek brute in its stall, absorbing all, giving nothing, pumping supplies only for its own caste;—water to be fed to other engines.

But seldom are keepers of engine-stables as unfortunate as these. The best they can get from the world is cruel laughter. Yet this woman, crippled in brain, her soul only half alive, this dull man, crippled in body, had God's gift of the liberal heart. If they are supremely absurd, so are all of us. We must include ourselves in the farce. These two, tottering through the dimness and vexation of our queer world, were willing the stranger should lean upon them. I say they had the good gift of the liberal heart. One

34 THE GOSPEL OF BEAUTY

thing was theirs to divide. That was a roof.
They gave me my third and they helped me
to hide from the rain. In the name of St.
Francis I laid me down. May that saint of
all saints be with them, and with all the
gentle and innocent and weary and broken!

UPON RETURNING TO THE COUNTRY ROAD

*Even the shrewd and bitter,
Gnarled by the old world's greed,
Cherished the stranger softly
Seeing his utter need.
Shelter and patient hearing,
These were their gifts to him,
To the minstrel chanting, begging,
As the sunset-fire grew dim.
The rich said "You are welcome."*

*Yea, even the rich were good.
How strange that in their feasting
His songs were understood!
The doors of the poor were open,
The poor who had wandered too,
Who had slept with ne'er a roof-tree*

I START ON MY WALK 35

*Under the wind and dew.
The minds of the poor were open,
There dark mistrust was dead.
They loved his wizard stories,
They bought his rhymes with bread.*

*Those were his days of glory,
Of faith in his fellow-men.
Therefore, to-day the singer
Turns beggar once again.*

II

Walking Through Missouri

TUESDAY MORNING, JUNE 4, 1912. In a hotel bedroom in Laddonia, Missouri. I occupy this room without charge.

Through the mercy of the gateman I crossed the Hannibal toll-bridge without paying fare, and the more enjoyed the pearly Mississippi in the evening twilight. Walking south of Hannibal next morning, Sunday, I was irresistibly reminded of Kentucky. It was the first real "pike" of my journey,—solid gravel, and everyone was exercising his racing pony in his racing cart, and giving me a ride down lovely avenues of trees. Here, as in dozens of other interesting "lifts" in Illinois, I had the driver's complete attention, recited *The Gospel of*

Beauty through a series of my more didactic rhymes till I was tired, and presented the *Village Improvement Parade* and the *Rhymes to Be Traded for Bread* and exhorted the comradely driver to forget me never. One colored horseman hitched forward on the plank of his breaking-cart and gave me his seat. Then came quite a ride into New London. He asked, "So you goin' to walk west to the mountains and all around?" "Yes, if this colt don't break my neck, or I don't lose my nerve or get bitten by a dog or anything." "Will you walk back?" "Maybe so, maybe not." He pondered a while, then said, with the Bert Williams manner, "*You'll ride back. Mark my words, you'll ride back!*"

He asked a little later, "Goin' to harves' in Kansas?" I assured him I was not going to harvest in Kansas. He rolled his big white eyes at me: "What in the name of Uncle Hillbilly *air* you up to then?"

In this case I could not present my tracts,

38 THE GOSPEL OF BEAUTY

for I was holding on to him for dear life. Just then he turned off my road. Getting out of the cart I nearly hung myself; and the colt was away again before I could say "Thank you."

Yesterday I passed through what was mostly a flat prairie country, abounding in the Missouri mule. I met one man on horseback driving before him an enormous specimen tied head to head with a draught-horse. The mule was continually dragging his good-natured comrade into the ditch and being jerked out again. The mule is a perpetual inquisitor and experimenter. He followed me along the fence with the alertest curiosity, when he was inside the field, yet meeting me in the road, he often showed deadly terror. If he was a mule colt, following his mare mamma along the pike, I had to stand in the side lane or hide behind a tree till he went by, or else he would turn and run as if the very devil were after him. Then the farmer on the mare would have to pursue

him a considerable distance, and drive him back with cuss words. 'Tis sweet to stir up so much emotion, even in the breast of an animal.

What do you suppose happened in New London? I approached what I thought a tiny Baptist chapel of whitewashed stone. Noting it was about sermon-time, and feeling like repenting, I walked in. Behold, the most harmoniously-colored Catholic shrine in the world! The sermon was being preached by the most gorgeously robed priest one could well conceive. The father went on to show how a vision of the Christ-child had appeared on the altar of a lax congregation in Spain. From that time those people, stricken with reverence and godly fear, put that church into repair, and the community became a true servant of the Lord. Infidels were converted, heretics were confounded.

After the sermon came the climax of the mass, and from the choir loft above my head

40 THE GOSPEL OF BEAUTY

came the most passionate religious singing I ever heard in my life. The excellence of the whole worship, even to the preaching of visions, was a beautiful surprise.

People do not open their eyes enough, neither their spiritual nor their physical eyes. They are not sensitive enough to loveliness either visible or by the pathway of visions. I wish every church in the world could see the Christ-child on the altar, every Methodist and Baptist as well as every Catholic congregation.

With these thoughts I sat and listened while that woman soloist sang not only through the Mass, but the Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament as well. The whole surprise stands out like a blazing star in my memory.

I say we do not see enough visions. I wish that, going out of the church door at noon, every worshipper in America could spiritually discern the Good St. Francis come down to our earth and singing of the

Sun. I wish that saint would return. I wish he would preach voluntary poverty to all the middle-class and wealthy folk of this land, with the power that once shook Europe.

FRIDAY, JUNE 7, 1912. In the mid-afternoon in the woods, many miles west of Jefferson City. I am sitting by a wild rose bush. I am looking down a long sunlit vista of trees.

Wednesday evening, three miles from Fulton, Missouri, I encountered a terrific storm. I tried one farm-house just before the rain came down, but they would not let me in, not even into the barn. They said it was "not convenient." They said there was another place a little piece ahead, anyway. Pretty soon I was considerably rained upon. But the "other place" did not appear. Later the thunder and lightning were frightful. It seemed to me everything was being struck all around me: because of the sheer down-

42 THE GOSPEL OF BEAUTY

pour it became pitch dark. It seemed as though the very weight of the rain would beat me into the ground. Yet I felt that I needed the washing. The night before I enjoyed the kind of hospitality that makes one yearn for a bath.

At last I saw a light ahead. I walked through more cataracts and reached it. Then I knocked at the door. I entered what revealed itself to be a negro cabin. Mine host was Uncle Remus himself, only a person of more delicacy and dignity. He appeared to be well preserved, though he was eighteen years old when the war broke out. He owns forty acres and more than one mule. His house was sweet and clean, all metal surfaces polished, all wood-work scrubbed white, all linen fresh laundered. He urged me to dry at his oven. It was a long process, taking much fuel. He allowed me to eat supper and breakfast with him and his family, which honor I scarcely deserved. The old man said grace standing

up. Then we sat down and he said another. The first was just family prayers. The second was thanksgiving for the meal. The table was so richly and delicately provided that within my heart I paraphrased the twenty-third Psalm, though I did not quote it out aloud: "Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies"—(namely, the thunder and lightning, and the inhospitable white man!).

I hope to be rained on again if it brings me communion bread like that I ate with my black host. The conversation was about many things, but began religiously; how "*Ol' Master in the sky gave us everything here to take keer of, and said we mussent waste any of it.*" The wife was a mixture of charming diffidence and eagerness in offering her opinion on these points of political economy and theology.

After supper the old gentleman told me a sweet-singing field-bird I described was called the "Rachel-Jane." He had five chil-

44 THE GOSPEL OF BEAUTY

dren grown and away from home and one sleek first voter still under his roof. The old gentleman asked the inevitable question: "Goin' west harvestin'?"

I said "No" again. Then I spread out and explained *The Village Improvement Parade*. This did not interest the family much, but they would never have done with asking me questions about Lincoln. And the fact that I came from Lincoln's home town was plainly my chief distinction in their eyes. The best bed was provided for me, and warm water in which to bathe, and I slept the sleep of the clean and regenerated in snowy linen. Next morning the sun shone, and I walked the muddy roads as cheerfully as though they were the paths of Heaven.

SUNDAY MORNING, JUNE 9, 1912. I am writing in the railroad station at Tipton, Missouri.

A little while back a few people began

to ask me to work for my meals. I believe this is because the "genteel" appearance with which I started has become something else. My derby hat has been used for so many things,—to keep off a Noah's flood of rain, to catch cherries in, to fight bumblebees, to cover my face while asleep, and keep away the vague terrors of the night,—that it is still a hat, but not quite in the mode. My face is baked by the sun and my hands are fried and stewed. My trousers are creased not in one place, but all over. These things made me look more like a person who, in the words of the conventional world, "*ought to work.*"

Having been requested to work once or twice, I immediately made it my custom to offer labor-power as a preliminary to the meal. I generally ask about five people before I find the one who happens to be in a meal-giving mood. This kindly person, about two-thirds of the time, refuses to let me work. I insist and insist, but he says,

46 THE GOSPEL OF BEAUTY

“Aw, come in and eat anyway.” The man who accepts my offer of work may let me cut weeds, or hoe corn or potatoes, but he generally shows me the woodpile and the axe. Even then every thud of that inevitably dull instrument seems to go through him. After five minutes he thinks I have worked an hour, and he comes to the porch and shouts: “Come in and get your dinner.”

Assuming a meal is worth thirty-five cents, I have never yet worked out the worth of one, at day-laborer’s wages. Very often I am called into the house three times before I come. Whether I work or not, the meals are big and good. Perhaps there is a little closer attention to *The Gospel of Beauty*, after three unheeded calls to dinner.

After the kindling is split and the meal eaten and they lean back in their chairs, a-weary of their mirth, by one means or another I show them how I am knocking at

the door of the world with a dream in my hand.

Because of the multitudes of tramps pouring west on the freight trains,—tramps I never see because I let freight cars alone,—night accommodations are not so easy to get as they were in my other walks in Pennsylvania and Georgia. I have not yet been forced to sleep under the stars, but each evening has been a scramble. There must be some better solution to this problem of a sleeping-place.

The country hotel, if there is one around, is sometimes willing to take in the man who flatly says he is broke. For instance, the inn-keeper's wife at Clarksburg was tenderly pitiful, yea, she was kind to me after the fashion of the holiest of the angels. There was a protracted meeting going on in the town. That was, perhaps, the reason for her exalted heart. But, whatever the reason, in this one case I was welcomed with such kindness and awe that I dared not lift

48 THE GOSPEL OF BEAUTY

up my haughty head or distribute my poems, or give tongue to my views, or let her suspect for a moment I was a special IDEA on legs. It was much lovelier to have her think I was utterly forlorn.

This morning when I said good-bye I fumbled my hat, mumbled my words and shuffled my feet, and may the Good St. Francis reward her.

When I asked the way to Tipton the farmer wanted me to walk the railroad. People cannot see "why the Sam Hill" anyone wants to walk the highway when the rails make a bee-line for the destination. This fellow was so anxious for the preservation of my feet he insisted it looked like rain. I finally agreed that, for the sake of avoiding a wetting, I had best hurry to Tipton by the ties. The six miles of railroad between Clarksburg and Tipton should be visited by every botanist in the United States. Skip the rest of this letter unless you are interested in a catalogue of flowers.

First comes the reed with the deep blue blossoms at the top that has bloomed by my path all the way from Springfield, Illinois. Then come enormous wild roses, showing every hue that friend of man ever displayed. Behold an army of white poppies join our march, then healthy legions of waving mustard. Our next recruits are tiny golden-hearted ragged kinsmen of the sunflower. No comrades depart from this triumphal march to Tipton. Once having joined us, they continue in our company. The mass of color grows deeper and more subtle each moment. Behold, regiments of pale lavender larkspur. 'Tis an excellent garden, the finer that it needs no tending. Though the rain has failed to come, I begin to be glad I am hobbling along over the vexatious ties. I forget my resolve to run for President.

Once I determined to be a candidate. I knew I would get the tramp-vote and the actor-vote. My platform was to be that

50 THE GOSPEL OF BEAUTY

railroad ties should be just close enough for men to walk on them in natural steps, neither mincing the stride nor widely stretching the legs.

Not yet have we reached Tipton. Behold a white flower, worthy of a better name, that the farmers call "sheep's tea." Behold purple larkspur joining the lavender larkspur. Behold that disreputable camp-follower the button-weed, wearing its shabby finery. Now a red delicate grass joins in, and a big purple and pink sort of an aster. Behold a pink and white sheep's tea. And look, there is a dwarf morning glory, the sweetest in the world. Here is a group of black-eyed Susans, marching like suffragettes to get the vote at Tipton. Here is a war-dance of Indian Paint. And here are bluebells.

"Goin' west harvestin'?"

"I have harvested already, ten thousand flowers an hour."

JUNE 10, 1912. 3 p. m. Three miles west of Sedalia, Missouri. In the woods. Near the automobile road to Kansas City.

Now that I have passed Sedalia I am pretty well on toward the Kansas line. Only three more days' journey, and then I shall be in Kansas, State of Romance, State of Expectation. Goodness knows Missouri has plenty of incident, plenty of merit. But it is a cross between Illinois and northern Kentucky, and to beg here is like begging in my own back-yard.

But the heart of Kansas is the heart of the West..... Inclosed find a feather from the wing of a young chicken-hawk. He happened across the road day before yesterday. The farmer stopped the team and killed him with his pitchfork. That farmer seemed to think he had done the Lord a service in ridding the world of a parasite. Yet I had a certain fellow-feeling for the hawk, as I have for anybody who likes chicken.

52 THE GOSPEL OF BEAUTY

This walk is full of suggestions for poems. Sometimes, in a confidential moment, I tell my hosts I am going to write a chronicle of the whole trip in verse. But I cannot write it now. The traveller at my stage is in a kind of farm-hand condition of mind and blood. He feels himself so much a part of the soil and the sun and the ploughed acres, he eats so hard and sleeps so hard, he has little more patience in trying to write than the husbandman himself.

If that poem is ever written I shall say,—to my fellow-citizens of Springfield, for instance:—"I have gone as your delegate to greet the fields, to claim them for you against a better day. I lay hold on these furrows on behalf of all those cooped up in cities."

I feel that in a certain mystical sense I have made myself part of the hundreds and hundreds of farms that lie between me and machine-made America. I have scarcely seen anything but crops since I left home.

The whole human race is grubbing in the soil, and the soil is responding with tremendous vigor. By walking I get as tired as any and imagine I work too. Sometimes the glory goes. Then I feel my own idleness above all other facts on earth. I want to get to work immediately. But I suppose I am a minstrel or nothing. (There goes a squirrel through the treetops.)

Every time I say "No" to the question "Goin' west harvestin'?" I am a little less brisk about reciting that triad of poems that I find is the best brief exposition of my gospel: (1) *The Proud Farmer*, (2) *The Illinois Village* and (3) *The Building of Springfield*.

If I do harvest it is likely to be just as it was at the Springfield water-works a year ago, when I broke my back in a week trying to wheel bricks.

JUNE 12, 1912. On the banks of a stream west of the town of Warrensburg, Missouri.

54 THE GOSPEL OF BEAUTY

Perhaps the problem of a night's lodging has been solved. I seem to have found a substitute for the spare bedrooms and white sheets of Georgia and Pennsylvania. It appears that no livery stable will refuse a man a place to sleep. What happened at Otterville and Warrensburg I can make happen from here on, or so I am assured by a farmhand. He told me that every tiniest village from here to western Kansas has at least two livery-stables and there a man may sleep for the asking. He should try to get permission to mount to the hay-mow, for, unless the cot in the office is a mere stretch of canvas, it is likely to be (excuse me) verminiferous. The stable man asks if the mendicant has matches or tobacco. If he has he must give them up. Also he is told not to poke his head far out of the loft window, for, if the insurance man caught him, it would be all up with the insurance. These preliminaries quickly settled, the transient requests a buggy-robe to sleep in, lest he be

overwhelmed with the loan of a horse-blanket. The objection to a horse-blanket is that it is a horse-blanket.

And so, if I am to believe my friend with the red neck, my good times at Warrensburg and Otterville are likely to continue.

Strange as it may seem, sleeping in a hay-loft is Romance itself. The alfalfa is soft and fragrant and clean, the wind blows through the big loft door, the stars shine through the cottonwoods. If I wake in the night I hear the stable-boys bringing in the teams of men who have driven a long way and back again to get something;—to get drunk, or steal the kisses of somebody's wife or put over a political deal or get a chance to preach a sermon;—and I get scraps of detail from the stable-boys after the main actors of the drama have gone. It sounds as though all the remarks were being made in the loft instead of on the ground floor. The horses stamp and stamp and the grinding sound of their teeth is so close to me I

56 THE GOSPEL OF BEAUTY

cannot believe at first that the mangers and feed-boxes are way down below

It is morning before I know it and the gorged birds are singing "shivaree, shivaree, Rachel Jane, Rachel Jane" in the mulberry trees, just outside the loft window. After a short walk I negotiate for breakfast, then walk on through Paradise and at the proper time negotiate for dinner, walk on through Paradise again and at six negotiate for the paradisical haymow, without looking for supper, and again more sleepy than hungry. The difference between this system and the old one is that about half past four I used to begin to worry about supper and night accommodations, and generally worried till seven. Now life is one long sweet stroll, and I watch the sunset from my bed in the alfalfa with the delights of the whole day renewed in my heart.

Passing through the village of Sedalia I inquired the way out of town to the main road west. My informant was a man named

McSweeny, drunk enough to be awfully friendly. He asked all sorts of questions. He induced me to step two blocks out of my main course down a side-street to his "Restaurant." He said he was not going to let me leave town without a square meal. It was a strange eating-place, full of ditch-diggers, teamsters, red-necked politicians and slender intellectual politicians. In the background was a scattering of the furtive daughters of pleasure, some white, some black. The whole institution was but an annex to the bar room in front. Mr. McSweeny looked over my book while I ate. After the meal he gathered a group of the politicians and commanded me to recite. I gave them my rhyme in memory of Altgeld and my rhyme in denunciation of Lorimer, and my rhyme denouncing all who coöperated in the white slave trade, including sellers of drink. Mr. McSweeny said I was the goods, and offered to pass the hat, but I would not permit. A handsome black jeze-

58 THE GOSPEL OF BEAUTY

bel sat as near us as she dared and listened quite seriously. I am sure she would have put something in that hat if it had gone round.

"I suppose," said Mr. McSweeny, as he stood at his door to bow adieu, "you will harvest when you get a little further west?"

That afternoon I walked miles and miles through rough country, and put up with a friendly farmer named John Humphrey. He had children like little golden doves, and a most hard-working wife. The man had harvested and travelled eight years in the west before he had settled down. He told me all about it. Until late that night he told me endless fascinating stories upon the theme of that free man's land ahead of me. If he had not had those rosy babies to anchor him, he would have picked up and gone along, and argued down my rule to travel alone.

Because he had been a man of the road there was a peculiar feeling of understand-

ing in the air. They were people of much natural refinement. I was the more grateful for their bread when I considered that when I came upon them at sunset they were working together in the field. There was not a hand to help. How could they be so happy and seem so blest? Their day was nearer sixteen than eight hours long. I felt deathly ashamed to eat their bread. I told them so, with emphasis. But the mother said, "We always takes in them that asks, and nobody never done us no harm yet."

That night was a turning point with me. In reply to a certain question I said: "*Yes. I am going west harvesting.*"

I asked the veteran traveller to tell me the best place to harvest. He was sitting on the floor pulling the children's toes, and having a grand time. He drew himself up into a sort of oracular knot, with his chin on his knees, and gesticulated with his pipe.

"Go straight west," he said, "to Great Bend, Barton County, Kansas, the banner

60 THE GOSPEL OF BEAUTY

wheat county of the United States. Arrive about July fifth. Walk to the public square. Walk two miles north. Look around. You will see nothing but wheat fields, and farmers standing on the edge of the road crying into big red handkerchiefs. Ask the first man for work. He will stop crying and give it to you. Wages will be two dollars and a half a day, and keep. You will have all you want to eat and a clean blanket in the hay."

I have resolved to harvest at Great Bend.

HEART OF GOD

A PRAYER IN THE JUNGLES OF HEAVEN

*O great Heart of God,
Once vague and lost to me,
Why do I throb with your throb to-night,
In this land, Eternity?
O little Heart of God,
Sweet intruding stranger,
You are laughing in my human breast,
A Christ-child in a manger.
Heart, dear Heart of God,*

*Beside you now I kneel,
Strong Heart of Faith. O Heart not mine,
Where God has set His seal.
Wild thundering Heart of God
Out of my doubt I come,
And my foolish feet with prophets' feet,
March with the prophets' drum.*

III

Walking into Kansas

IT has been raining quite a little. The roads are so muddy I have to walk the ties. Keeping company with the railroad is almost a habit. While this shower passes I write in the station at Stillwell, Kansas.

JUNE 14, 1912. I have crossed the mystic border. I have left Earth. I have entered Wonderland. Though I am still east of the geographical centre of the United States, in every spiritual sense I am in the West. This morning I passed the stone mile-post that marks the beginning of Kansas.

I went over the border and encountered—what do you think? Wild strawberries! Lo, where the farmer had cut the weeds

between the road and the fence, the gentle fruits revealed themselves, growing in the shadow down between the still-standing weeds. They shine out in a red line that stretches on and on, and a man has to resolve to stop eating several times. Just as he thinks he has conquered desire the line gets dazzlingly red again.

The berries grow at the end of a slender stalk, clustered six in a bunch. One gathers them by the stems, in bouquets, as it were, and eats off the fruit like taffy off a stick.

I was gathering buckets of cherries for a farmer's wife yesterday. This morning after the strawberries had mitigated I encountered a bush of raspberries, and then hedges on hedges of mulberries both white and red. The white mulberries are the sweetest. If this is the wild West, give me more. There are many varieties of trees, and they are thick as in the East. The people seem to grow more cordial. I was eating mulberries outside the yard of a villager. He asked

64 THE GOSPEL OF BEAUTY

me in where the eating was better. And then he told me the town scandal, while I had my dessert.

A day or so ago I hoed corn all morning for my dinner. This I did cheerfully, considering I had been given a good breakfast at that farm for nothing. I feel that two good meals are worth about a morning's work anyway. And then I had company. The elderly owner of the place hoed along with me. He saved the country, by preaching to me the old fashioned high tariff gospel, and I saved it by preaching to him the new fashioned Gospel of Beauty. Meanwhile the corn was hoed. Then we went in and ate the grandest of dinners. That house was notable for having on its walls really artistic pictures, not merely respectable pictures, nor yet seed-catalogue advertisements.

That night, in passing through a village, I glimpsed a man washing his dishes in the

rear of a blacksmith shop. I said to myself: "Ah ha! Somebody keeping bach."

I knew I was welcome. There is no fear of the stranger in such a place, for there are no ladies to reassure or propitiate. Permission to sleep on the floor was granted as soon as asked. I spread out *The Kansas City Star*, which is a clean sheet, put my verses under my head for a pillow and was content. Next morning the sun was in my eyes. There was the odor of good fried bacon in the air.

"Git up and eat a snack, pardner," said my friend the blacksmith. And while I ate he told me the story of his life.

I had an amusing experience at the town of Belton. I had given an entertainment at the hotel on the promise of a night's lodging. I slept late. Over my transom came the breakfast-table talk. "That was a hot entertainment that young bum gave us last night," said one man. "He ought to get to work, the dirty lazy loafer," said another.

66 THE GOSPEL OF BEAUTY

The schoolmaster spoke up in an effort not to condescend to his audience: "He is evidently a fraud. I talked to him a long time after the entertainment. The pieces he recited were certainly not his own. I have read some of them somewhere. It is too easy a way to get along, especially when the man is as able to work as this one. Of course in the old days literary men used to be obliged to do such things. But it isn't at all necessary in the Twentieth Century. Real poets are highly paid." Another spoke up: "I don't mind a fake, but he is a rotten reciter, anyhow. If he had said one more I would have just walked right out. You noticed ol' Mis' Smith went home after that piece about the worms." Then came the landlord's voice: "After the show was over I came pretty near not letting him have his room. All I've got to say is he don't get any breakfast."

I dressed, opened the doorway serenely, and strolled past the table, smiling with all

the ease of a minister at his own church-social. In my most ornate manner I thanked the landlord and landlady for their extreme kindness. I assumed that not one of the gentle-folk had intended to have me hear their analysis. 'Twas a grand exit. Yet, in plain language, these people "got my goat." I have struggled with myself all morning, almost on the point of ordering a marked copy of a magazine sent to that smart school-master. "*Evidently a fraud!*" Indeed!

"Goin' wes' harvesin'?"

"Yes, yes. I think I will harvest when I get to Great Bend."

JUNE 18, 1912. Approaching Emporia. I am sitting in the hot sun by the Santa Fé tracks, after two days of walking those tracks in the rain. I am near a queer little Mexican house built of old railroad ties.

I had had two sticks of candy begged from a grocer for breakfast. I was keeping warm by walking fast. Because of the

68 THE GOSPEL OF BEAUTY

muddy roads and the sheets of rain coming down it was impossible to leave the tracks. It was almost impossible to make speed since the ballast underfoot was almost all of it big rattling broken stone. I had walked that Santa Fé railroad a day and a half in the drizzle and downpour. It was a little past noon, and my scanty inner fuel was almost used up. I dared not stop a minute now, lest I catch cold. There was no station in sight ahead. When the mists lifted I saw that the tracks went on and on, straight west to the crack of doom, not even a water-tank in sight. The mists came down, then lifted once more, and, as though I were Childe Roland, I suddenly saw a shack to the right, in dimensions about seven feet each way. It was mostly stove-pipe, and that pipe was pouring out enough smoke to make three of Aladdin's Jinns. I presume some one heard me whistling. The little door opened. Two heads popped out, "Come in, you slab-sided hobo," they yelled affectionately. "Come in

and get dry." And so my heart was made suddenly light after a day and a half of hard whistling.

At the inside end of that busy smoke-stack was a roaring redhot stove about as big as a hat. It had just room enough on top for three steaming coffee cans at a time. There were four white men with their chins on their knees completely occupying the floor of one side of the mansion, and four Mexicans filled the other. Every man was hunched up to take as little room as possible. It appeared that my only chance was to move the tins and sit on the stove. But one Mexican sort of sat on another Mexican and the new white man was accommodated. These fellows were a double-section gang, for the track is double all along here.

I dried out pretty quick. The men began to pass up the coffee off the stove. It strangled and blistered me, it was so hot. The men were almost to the bottom of the food sections of their buckets and were be-

70 THE GOSPEL OF BEAUTY

ginning to throw perfectly good sandwiches and extra pieces of pie through the door. I said that if any man had anything to throw away would he just wait till I stepped outside so I could catch it. They handed me all I could ever imagine a man eating. It rained and rained and rained, and I ate till I could eat no more. One man gave me for dessert the last half of his cup of stewed raisins along with his own spoon. Good raisins they were, too. A Mexican urged upon me some brown paper and cigarette tobacco. I was sorry I did not smoke. The men passed up more and more hot coffee.

That coffee made me into a sort of thermos bottle. On the strength of it I walked all afternoon through sheets and cataracts. When dark came I slept in wet clothes in a damp blanket in the hay of a windy livery-stable without catching cold.

Now it is morning. The sky is reasonably clear, the weather is reasonably warm, but I

am no longer a thermos bottle, no, no. I am sitting on the hottest rock I can find, letting the sun go through my bones. The coffee in me has turned at last to ice and snow. Emporia, the Athens of America, is just ahead. Oh, for a hot bath and a clean shirt!

A mad dog tried to bite me yesterday morning, when I made a feeble attempt to leave the track. When I was once back on the ties, he seemed afraid and would not come closer. His bark was the ghastliest thing I ever heard. As for his bite, he did not get quite through my shoe-heel.

EMPORIA, KANSAS, JUNE 19, 1912. On inquiring at the Emporia General Delivery for mail, I found your letter telling me to call upon your friend Professor Kerr. He took my sudden appearance most kindly, and pardoned my battered attire and the mud to the knees. After a day in his house I am ready to go on, dry and feasted and warm and clean. The professor's help

72 THE GOSPEL OF BEAUTY

seemed to come in just in time. I was a most weary creature.

Thinking it over this morning, the bathtub appears to be the first outstanding advantage the cultured man has over the half-civilized. Quite often the folk with swept houses and decent cooking who have given my poems discriminating attention, who have given me good things to eat, forget, even when they entertain him overnight, that the stranger would like to soak himself thoroughly. Many of the working people seem to keep fairly clean with the washpan as their principal ally. But the tub is indispensable to the mendicant in the end, unless he is walking through a land of crystal waterfalls, like North Georgia.

I am an artificial creature at last, dependent, after all, upon modern plumbing. 'Tis, perhaps, not a dignified theme, but I retired to the professor's bathroom and washed off the entire State of Missouri and the eastern counties of Kansas, and did a deal of

laundry work on the sly. This last was not openly confessed to the professor, but he might have guessed, I was so cold on the front porch that night.

I shall not soon lose the memory of this the first day of emergence from the strait paths of St. Francis, this first meeting, since I left Springfield, with a person on whom I had a conventional social claim. I had forgotten what the delicacy of a cultured welcome would be like. The professor's table was a marvel to me. I was astonished to discover there were such fine distinctions in food and linen. And for all my troubadour profession, I had almost forgotten there were such distinctions in books. I have hardly seen one magazine since I left you. The world where I have been moving reads nothing but newspapers. It is confusing to bob from one world to the other, to zig-zag across the social dead-line. I sat in the professor's library a very mixed-up person, feeling I could hardly stay a minute, yet too

74 THE GOSPEL OF BEAUTY

heavy-footed to stir an inch, and immensely grateful and relaxed.

Sooner or later I am going to step up into the rarefied civilized air once too often and stay there in spite of myself. I shall get a little too fond of the china and old silver, and forget the fields. Books and teacups and high-brow conversations are awfully insinuating things, if you give them time to be. One gets along somehow, and pleasure alternates with pain, and the sum is the joy of life, while one is below. But to quit is like coming up to earth after deep-sea diving in a heavy suit. One scarcely realizes he has been under heavier-than-air pressure, and has been fighting off great forces, till he has taken off his diving helmet, as it were. And yet there is a baffling sense of futility in the restful upper air. I remember it once, long ago, in emerging in Warren, Ohio, and once in emerging in Macon, Georgia:—the feeling that the upper world is all tissue paper,

WALKING INTO KANSAS 75

that the only choice a real man can make is to stay below with the great forces of life forever, even though he be a tramp—the feeling that, to be a little civilized, we sacrifice enormous powers and joys. For all I was so tired and so very grateful to the professor, I felt like a bull in a china shop. I should have been out in the fields, eating grass.

THE KALLYOPE YELL

[*Loudly and rapidly with a leader, College yell fashion*]

I

Proud men
Eternally
Go about,
Slander me,
Call me the "Calliope."
Sizz
Fizz

76 THE GOSPEL OF BEAUTY

II

I am the Gutter Dream,
Tune-maker, born of steam,
Tooting joy, tooting hope.
I am the Kallyope,
Car called the Kallyope.
Willy willy willy wah HOO!
See the flags: snow-white tent,
See the bear and elephant,
See the monkey jump the rope,
Listen to the Kallyope, Kallyope, Kallyope!
Soul of the rhinoceros
And the hippopotamus
(Listen to the lion roar!)
Jaguar, cockatoot,
Loons, owls,
Hoot, Hoot.
Listen to the lion roar,
Listen to the lion roar,
Listen to the lion R-O-A-R!
Hear the leopard cry for gore,
Willy willy willy wah HOO!

WALKING INTO KANSAS 77

Hail the bloody Indian band,
Hail, all hail the popcorn stand,
Hail to Barnum's picture there,
People's idol everywhere,
Whoop, whoop, whoop, WHOOP!
Music of the mob am I,
Circus day's tremendous cry:—
I am the Kallyope, Kallyope, Kallyope!
Hoot toot, hoot toot, hoot toot, hoot toot,
Willy willy willy wah HOO!
Sizz, fizz

III

Born of mobs, born of steam,
Listen to my golden dream,
Listen to my golden dream,
Listen to my G-O-L-D-E-N D-R-E-A-M!
Whoop whoop whoop whoop WHOOP!
I will blow the proud folk low,
Humanize the dour and slow,
I will shake the proud folk down,
(Listen to the lion roar!)
Popcorn crowds shall rule the town—

78 THE GOSPEL OF BEAUTY

Willy willy willy wah HOO!
Steam shall work melodiously,
Brotherhood increase.
You'll see the world and all it holds
For fifty cents apiece.
Willy willy willy wah HOO!
Every day a circus day.

What?

Well, *almost* every day.
Nevermore the sweater's den,
Nevermore the prison pen.
Gone the war on land and sea
That aforetime troubled men.
Nations all in amity,
Happy in their plumes arrayed
In the long bright street parade.
Bands a-playing every day.

What?

Well, *almost* every day.
I am the Kallyope, Kallyope, Kallyope!

Willy willy willy wah HOO!
 Hoot, toot, hoot, toot,
 Whoop whoop whoop whoop,
 Willy willy willy wah HOO!
 Sizz, fizz

IV

Every soul
 Resident
 In the earth's one circus tent!
 Every man a trapeze king
 Then a pleased spectator there.
 On the benches! In the ring!
 While the neighbors gawk and stare
 And the cheering rolls along.
 Almost every day a race
 When the merry starting gong
 Rings, each chariot on the line,
 Every driver fit and fine
 With the steel-spring Roman grace.
 Almost every day a dream,
 Almost every day a dream.
 Every girl,

80 THE GOSPEL OF BEAUTY

Maid or wife,
Wild with music,
Eyes a-gleam
With that marvel called desire:
Actress, princess, fit for life,
Armed with honor like a knife,
Jumping thro' the hoops of fire.
(Listen to the lion roar!)
Making all the children shout
Clowns shall tumble all about,
Painted high and full of song
While the cheering rolls along,
Tho' they scream,
Tho' they rage,
Every beast
In his cage,
Every beast
In his den
That aforetime troubled men.

V

I am the Kallyope, Kallyope, Kallyope,
Tooting hope, tooting hope, tooting hope,
 tooting hope;
Shaking window-pane and door
With a crashing cosmic tune,
With the war-cry of the spheres,
Rhythm of the roar of noon,
Rhythm of Niagara's roar,
Voicing planet, star and moon,
SHRIEKING of the better years.
Prophet-singers will arise,
Prophets coming after me,
Sing my song in softer guise
With more delicate surprise;
I am but the pioneer
Voice of the Democracy;
I am the gutter dream,
I am the golden dream,
Singing science, singing steam.
I will blow the proud folk down,

82 THE GOSPEL OF BEAUTY

(Listen to the lion roar!)

I am the Kallyope, Kallyope, Kallyope,
Tooting hope, tooting hope, tooting hope,
 tooting hope,

Willy willy willy wah HOO!

Hoot, toot', hoot toot, hoot toot, hoot toot,

Whoop whoop, whoop whoop,

Whoop whoop, whoop whoop,

Willy willy willy wah HOO!

Sizz

Fizz

SUNDAY MORNING, JUNE 23, 1912. I am writing on the top of a pile of creosote-soaked ties between the Santa Fé tracks and the trail that runs parallel to the tracks. Florence, Kansas, is somewhere ahead.

In the East the railroads and machinery choke the land to death and it was there I made my rule against them. But the farther West I go the more the very life of the country seems to depend upon them. I suppose, though, that some day, even out West

WALKING INTO KANSAS 83

here, the rule against the railroad will be a good rule.

Meanwhile let me say that my Ruskinian prejudices are temporarily overcome by the picturesqueness and efficiency of the Santa Fé. It is double-tracked, and every four miles is kept in order by a hand-car crew that is spinning back and forth all the time. The air seems to be full of hand-cars.

Walking in a hurry to make a certain place by nightfall I have become acquainted with these section hands, and, most delightful to relate, have ridden in their iron conveyances, putting my own back into the work. Half or three-fourths of the employees are Mexicans who are as ornamental in the actual landscape as they are in a Remington drawing. These Mexicans are tractable serfs of the Santa Fé. If there were enough miles of railroad in Mexico to keep all the inhabitants busy on section, perhaps the internal difficulties could be ended. These peons live peacefully next to the

84 THE GOSPEL OF BEAUTY

tracks in houses built by the company from old ties. The ties are placed on end, side by side, with plaster in the cracks, on a tiny oblong two-room plan. There is a little roofed court between the rooms. A farmer told me that the company tried Greek serfs for a while, but they made trouble for outsiders and murdered each other.

The road is busy as busy can be. Almost any time one can see enormous freight-trains rolling by or mile-a-minute passenger trains. Gates are provided for each farmer's right of way. I was told by an exceptional Mexican with powers of speech that the efficient dragging of the wagon-roads, especially the "New Santa Fé Trail" that follows the railroad, is owing to the missionary work of King, the split-log drag man, who was employed to go up and down this land agitating his hobby.

When the weather is good, touring automobiles whiz past. They have pennants showing they are from Kansas City, Em-

poria, New York or Chicago. They have camping canvas and bedding on the back seats of the car, or strapped in the rear. They are on camping tours to Colorado Springs and the like pleasure places. Some few avow they are going to the coast. About five o'clock in the evening some man making a local trip is apt to come along alone. He it is that wants the other side of the machine weighed down. He it is that will offer me a ride and spin me along from five to twenty-five miles before supper. This delightful use that may be made of an automobile in rounding out a day's walk has had something to do with mending my prejudice against it, despite the grand airs of the tourists that whirl by at midday. I still maintain that the auto is a carnal institution, to be shunned by the truly spiritual, but there are times when I, for one, get tired of being spiritual.

Much of the country east of Emporia is hilly and well-wooded and hedged like Mis-

86 THE GOSPEL OF BEAUTY

souri. But now I am getting into the range region. Yesterday, after several miles of treeless land that had never known the plough, I said to myself: "Now I am really West." And my impression was reinforced when I reached a grand baronial establishment called "Clover Hill Ranch." It was flanked by the houses of the retainers. In the foreground and a little to the side was the great stone barn for the mules and horses. Back on the little hill, properly introduced by ceremonious trees, was the ranch house itself. And before it was my lord on his ranching charger. The aforesaid lord created quite an atmosphere of lordliness as he refused work in the alfalfa harvest to a battered stranger who bowed too low and begged too hard, perhaps. On the porch was my lady, feeding bread and honey to the beautiful young prince of the place.

I have not yet reached the wheat belt. Since the alfalfa harvest is on here, I shall try for that a bit.

WALKING INTO KANSAS 87

SUNDAY AFTERNOON, JUNE 30, 1912. In the spare room of a Mennonite farmer, who lives just inside the wheat belt.

This is going to be a long Sunday afternoon; so make up your minds for a long letter. I did not get work in the alfalfa. Yet there is news. I have been staying a week with this Mennonite family shocking wheat for them, though I am not anywhere near Great Bend.

Before I tell you of the harvest, I must tell you of these Mennonites. They are a dear people. I have heard from their reverent lips the name of their founder, Menno Simonis, who was born about the time of Columbus and Luther and other such worthies. They are as opposed to carnal literature as I am to tailor-made clothes, and I hold they are perfectly correct in allowing no fashion magazines in the house. Such modern books as they read deal with practical local philanthropies and great international mission movements, and their in-

88 THE GOSPEL OF BEAUTY

terdenominational feelings for all Christendom are strong. Yet they hold to their ancient verities, and antiquity broods over their meditations.

For instance I found in their bookcase an endless dialogue epic called *The Wandering Soul*, in which this soul, seeking mainly for information, engages in stilted conversation with Adam, Noah, and Simon Cleophas. Thereby the Wandering Soul is informed as to the orthodox history and chronology of the world from the Creation to the destruction of Jerusalem. The wood-cuts are devotional. They are worth walking to Kansas to see. The book had its third translation into Pennsylvania English in 1840, but several American editions had existed in German before that, and several German editions in Germany. It was originally written in the Dutch language and was popular among the Mennonites there. But it looks as if it was printed by Adam to last forever and scare bad boys.

Let us go to meeting. All the women are on their own side of the aisle. All of them have a fairly uniform Quakerish sort of dress of no prescribed color. In front are the most pious, who wear a black scoop-bonnet. Some have taken this off, and show the inevitable "prayer-covering" underneath. It is the plainest kind of a lace-cap, awfully coquettish on a pretty head. It is intended to mortify the flesh, and I suppose it *is* unbecoming to *some* women.

All the scoop-bonnets are not black. Toward the middle of the church, behold a cream-satin, a soft gray, a dull moon-gold. One young woman, moved, I fear, by the devil, turns and looks across the aisle at us. An exceedingly demure bow is tied all too sweetly under the chin, in a decorous butterfly style. Fie! fie! Is this mortifying the flesh? And I note with pain that the black bonnets grow fewer and fewer toward the rear of the meeting house.

Here come the children, with bobbing

90 THE GOSPEL OF BEAUTY

headgear of every color of the rainbow, yet the same scoop-pattern still. They have been taking little walks and runs between Sunday-school and church, and are all flushed and panting. But I would no more criticise the color of their headgear than the color in their faces. Some of them squeeze in among the black rows in front and make piety reasonable. But we noted by the door as they entered something that both the church and the world must abhor. Seated as near to the men's side as they can get, with a mixture of shame and defiance in their faces, are certain daughters of the Mennonites who insist on dressing after the fashions that come from Paris and Kansas City and Emporia. By the time the rumors of what is proper in millinery have reached this place they are a disconcerting mixture of cherries, feathers and ferns. And somehow there are too many mussy ribbons on the dresses.

We can only guess how these rebels must suffer under the concentrated silent prayers

of the godly. Poor honest souls! they take to this world's vain baggage and overdo it. Why do they not make up their minds to serve the devil sideways, like that sly puss with the butterfly bow?

On the men's side of the house the division on dress is more acute. The Holiness movement, the doctrine of the Second Blessing that has stirred many rural Methodist groups, has attacked the Mennonites also. Those who dispute for this new ism of sanctification leave off their neckties as a sign. Those that retain their neckties, satisfied with what Menno Simonis taught, have a hard time remaining in a state of complete calm. The temptation to argue the matter is almost more than flesh can bear.

But, so far as I could discover, there was no silent prayer over the worst lapse of these people. What remains of my Franciscan soul was hurt to discover that the buggy-shed of the meeting-house was full of automobiles. And to meet a Mennonite on the

92 THE GOSPEL OF BEAUTY

road without a necktie, his wife in the blackest of bonnets, honking along in one of those glittering brazen machines, almost shakes my confidence in the Old Jerusalem Gospel.

Yet let me not indulge in disrespect. Every spiritual warfare must abound in its little ironies. They are keeping their rule against finery as well as I am keeping mine against the railroad. And they have their own way of not being corrupted by money. Their ministry is unsalaried. Their preachers are sometimes helpers on the farms, sometimes taken care of outright, the same as I am.

As will later appear, despite some inconsistencies, the Mennonites have a piety as literal as any to be found on the earth. Since they are German there is no lack of thought in their system. I attended one of their quarterly conferences and I have never heard better discourses on the distinctions between the four gospels. The men who spoke were scholars.

WALKING INTO KANSAS 93

The Mennonites make it a principle to ignore politics, and are non-resistants in war. I have read in the life of one of their heroes what a terrible time his people had in the Shenandoah valley in the days of Sheridan. . . . Three solemn tracts are here on my dresser. The first is against church organs, embodying a plea for simplicity and the spending of such money on local benevolences and world-wide missions. The tract aptly compares the church-organ to the Tibetan prayer-wheel, and later to praying by phonograph. A song is a prayer to them, and they sing hymns and nothing but hymns all week long.

The next tract is on non-conformity to this world, and insists our appearance should indicate our profession, and that fashions drive the poor away from the church. It condemns jewels and plaiting of the hair, etc., and says that such things stir up a wicked and worldly lust in the eyes of youth. This tract goes so far as to put worldly pic-

94 THE GOSPEL OF BEAUTY

tures under the ban. Then comes another, headed Bible Teaching on Dress. It goes on to show that every true Christian, especially that vain bird, the female, should wear something like the Mennonite uniform to indicate the line of separation from "the World." I have a good deal of sympathy for all this, for indeed is it not briefly comprehended in my own rule: "Carry no baggage"?

These people celebrate communion every half year, and at the same time they practise the ritual of washing the feet. Since Isadora Duncan has rediscovered the human foot æsthetically, who dares object to it in ritual? It is all a question of what we are trained to expect. Certainly these people are respecters of the human foot and not ashamed to show it. Next to the way their women have of making a dash to find their gauzy prayer-covering, which they put on for grace at table and Bible-lesson before breakfast, their most striking habit is the

way both men and women go about in very clean bare feet after supper. Next to this let me note their resolve to have no profane hour whatsoever. When not actually at work they sit and sing hymns, each Christian on his own hook as he has leisure.

My first evening among these dear strangers I was sitting alone by the front door, looking out on the wheat. I was thrilled to see the fairest member of the household enter, not without grace and dignity. Her prayer covering was on her head, her white feet were shining like those of Nicolette and her white hymn-book was in her hand. She ignored me entirely. She was rapt in trance. She sat by the window and sang through the book, looking straight at a rose in the wall-paper.

I lingered there, reading *The Wandering Soul* just as oblivious of her presence as she was of mine. Oh, no; there was no art in the selection of her songs! I remember one which was to this effect:

96 THE GOSPEL OF BEAUTY

“Don’t let it be said:
‘Too late, too late
To enter that Golden Gate.’
Be ready, for soon
The time will come
To enter that Golden Gate.”

On the whole she had as much right to plunk down and sing hymns out of season as I have to burst in and quote poetry to peaceful and unprotected households.

I would like to insert a discourse here on the pleasure and the naturalness and the humanness of testifying to one’s gospel whatever that gospel may be, barefooted or golden-slippered or iron-shod. The best we may win in return may be but a kindly smile. We may never make one convert. Still the duty of testifying remains, and is enjoined by the invisible powers and makes for the health of the soul. This Menonite was a priestess of her view of the truth and comes of endless generations of such snow-footed apostles. I presume the

sect ceased to enlarge when the Quakers ceased to thrive, but I make my guess that it does not crumble as fast as the Quakers, having more German stolidity.

Let me again go forward, testifying to my particular lonely gospel in the face of such pleasant smiles and incredulous questions as may come. I wish I could start a sturdy sect like old Menno Simonis did. They should dress as these have done, and be as stubborn and rigid in their discipline. They should farm as these have done, but on reaching the point where the Mennonite buys the automobile, that money and energy should go into the making of cross-roads palaces for the people, golden as the harvest field, and disciplined well-parked villages, good as a psalm, and cities fair as a Mennonite lady in her prayer-covering, delicate and noble as Athens the unforgotten, the divine.

The Mennonite doctrine of non-participation in war or politics leads them to confine

98 THE GOSPEL OF BEAUTY

their periodic literature to religious journals exclusively, plus *The Drover's Journal* to keep them up to date on the prices of farm-products. There is only one Mennonite political event, the coming of Christ to judge the earth. Of that no man knoweth the day or the hour. We had best be prepared and not play politics or baseball or anything. Just keep unspotted and harvest the wheat.

"Goin' wes' harvesin'?"

I have harvested, thank you. Four days and a half I have shocked wheat in these prayer-consecrated fields that I see even now from my window. And I have good hard dollars in my pocket, which same dollars are against my rules.

I will tell you of the harvest in the next letter.

WALKING INTO KANSAS 99

ON THE ROAD TO NOWHERE

*On the road to nowhere
What wild oats did you sow
When you left your father's house
With your cheeks aglow?
Eyes so strained and eager
To see what you might see?
Were you thief or were you fool
Or most nobly free?
Were the tramp-days knightly,
True sowing of wild seed?
Did you dare to make the songs
Vanquished workmen need?
Did you waste much money
To deck a leper's feast?
Love the truth, defy the crowd,
Scandalize the priest?
On the road to nowhere
What wild oats did you sow?
Stupids find the nowhere-road
Dusty, grim and slow.
Ere their sowing's ended
They turn them on their track:
Look at the caitiff craven nights
Repentant, hurrying back!*

100 THE GOSPEL OF BEAUTY

*Grown ashamed of nowhere,
Of rags endured for years,
Lust for velvet in their hearts,
Pierced with Mammon's spears.
All but a few fanatics
Give up their darling goal,
Seek to be as others are,
Stultify the soul.
Reapings now confront them,
Glut them, or destroy,
Curious seeds, grain or weeds,
Sown with awful joy.
Hurried is their harvest,
They make soft peace with men.
Pilgrims pass. They care not,
Will not tramp again.
O nowhere, golden nowhere!
Sages and fools go on
To your chaotic ocean,
To your tremendous dawn.
Far in your fair dream-haven,
Is nothing or is all . . .
They press on, singing, sowing
Wild deeds without recall!*

IV

In Kansas: The First Harvest

MONDAY AFTERNOON, JULY 1, 1912. A little west of Newton, Kansas. In the public library of a village whose name I forget.

Here is the story of how I came to harvest. I was by chance taking a short respite from the sunshine, last Monday noon, on the porch of the Mennonite farmer. I had had dinner further back. But the good folk asked me to come in and have dessert anyway. It transpired that one of the two harvest hands was taking his farewell meal. He was obliged to fill a contract to work further West, a contract made last year. I timidly suggested I might take his place. To my astonishment I was engaged at once. This fellow was working for two dollars a

102 THE GOSPEL OF BEAUTY

day, but I agreed to \$1.75, seeing my predecessor was a skilled man and twice as big as I was. My wages, as I discovered, included three rich meals, and a pretty spare room to sleep in, and a good big bucket to bathe in nightly.

I anticipate history at this point by telling how at the end of the week my wages looked as strange to me as a bunch of unexpected ducklets to a hen. They were as curious to contemplate as a group of mischievous nieces who have come to spend the day with their embarrassed, fluttering maiden aunt.

I took my wages to Newton, and spent all on the vanities of this life. First the grandest kind of a sombrero, so I shall not be sun-struck in the next harvest-field, which I narrowly escaped in this. Next, the most indestructible of corduroys. Then I had my shoes re-soled and bought a necktie that was like the oriflamme of Navarre, and attended to several other points of vanity. I started out again, dead broke and happy.

THE FIRST HARVEST 103

If I work hereafter I can send most all my wages home, for I am now in real travelling costume.

But why linger over the question of wages till I show I earned those wages?

Let me tell you of a typical wheat-harvesting day. The field is two miles from the house. We make preparations for a twelve-hour siege. Halters and a barrel of water and a heap of alfalfa for the mules, binder-twine and oil for the reaper and water-jugs for us are loaded into the spring wagon. Two mules are hitched in front, two are led behind. The new reaper was left in the field yesterday. We make haste. We must be at work by the time the dew dries. The four mules are soon hitched to the reaper and proudly driven into the wheat by the son of the old Mennonite. This young fellow carries himself with proper dignity as heir of the farm. He is a credit to the father. He will not curse the mules, though those animals forget their religion sometimes, and

104 THE GOSPEL OF BEAUTY

act after the manner of their kind. The worst he will do will be to call one of them an old cow. I suppose when he is vexed with a cow he calls it an' old mule. My other companion is a boy of nineteen from a Mennonite community in Pennsylvania. He sets me a pace. Together we build the sheaves into shocks, of eight or ten sheaves each, put so they will not be shaken by an ordinary Kansas wind. The wind has been blowing nearly all the time at a rate which in Illinois would mean a thunderstorm in five minutes, and sometimes the clouds loom in the thunderstorm way, yet there is not a drop of rain, and the clouds are soon gone.

In the course of the week the boy and I have wrestled with heavy ripe sheaves, heavier green sheaves, sheaves full of Russian thistles and sheaves with the string off. The boy, as he sings *The day-star hath risen*, twists a curious rope of straw and reties the loose bundles with one turn of the hand.

THE FIRST HARVEST 105

I try, but cannot make the knot. Once all sheaves were so bound.

Much of the wheat must be cut heavy and green because there is a liability to sudden storms or hail that will bury it in mud, or soften the ground and make it impossible to drag the reaper, or hot winds that suddenly ripen the loose grain and shake it into the earth. So it is an important matter to get the wheat out when it is anywhere near ready. I found that two of the girls were expecting to take the place of the departing hand, if I had not arrived.

The Mennonite boy picked up two sheaves to my one at the beginning of the week. To-day I learn to handle two at a time and he immediately handles three at a time. He builds the heart of the sheaf. Then we add the outside together. He is always marching ahead and causing me to feel ashamed.

The Kansas grasshopper makes himself friendly. He bites pieces out of the back of my shirt the shape and size of the ace

106 THE GOSPEL OF BEAUTY

of spades. Then he walks into the door he has made and loses himself. Then he has to be helped out, in one way or another.

The old farmer, too stiff for work, comes out on his dancing pony and rides behind the new reaper. This reaper was bought only two days ago and he beams with pride upon it. It seems that he and his son almost swore, trying to tinker the old one. The farmer looks with even more pride upon the field, still a little green, but mostly golden. He dismounts and tests the grain, threshing it out in his hand, figuring the average amount in several typical heads. He stands off, and is guilty of an æsthetic thrill. He says of the sea of gold: "I wish I could have a photograph of that." (O eloquent word, for a Mennonite!) Then he plays at building half a dozen shocks, then goes home till late in the afternoon. We three are again masters of the field.

We are in a level part of Kansas, not a rolling range as I found it further east.

THE FIRST HARVEST 107

The field is a floor. Hedges gradually faded from the landscape in counties several days' journey back, leaving nothing but unbroken billows to the horizon. But the hedges have been resumed in this region. Each time round the enormous field we stop at a break in the line of those untrimmed old thorn-trees. Here we rest a moment and drink from the water-jug. To keep from getting sunstruck I profanely waste the water, pouring it on my head, and down my neck to my feet. I came to this farm wearing a derby, and have had to borrow a slouch with a not-much-wider rim from the farmer. It was all the extra headgear available in this thrifty region. Because of that not-much-wider rim my face is sunburned all over every day. I have not yet received my wages to purchase my sombrero.

As we go round the field, the Mennonite boy talks religion, or is silent. I have caught the spirit of the farm, and sing all the hymn-tunes I can remember. Sometimes the wind

108 THE GOSPEL OF BEAUTY

turns hot. Perspiration cannot keep up with evaporation. Our skins are dry as the driest stubble. Then we stand and wait for a little streak of cool wind. It is pretty sure to come in a minute. "That's a nice air," says the boy, and gets to work. Once it was so hot all three of us stopped five minutes by the hedge. Then it was I told them the story of the hens I met just west of Emporia.

I had met ten hens walking single-file into the town of Emporia. I was astonished to meet educated hens. Each one was swearing. I would not venture, I added, to repeat what they said.

Not a word from the Mennonites.

I continued in my artless way, showing how I stopped the next to the last hen, though she was impatient to go on. I inquired "Where are you all travelling?" She said "To Emporia." And so I asked, "Why are you swearing so?" She answered,

"Don't you know about the Sunday-school picnic?" I paused in my story.

No word from the Mennonites. One of them rose rather impatiently.

I poured some water on my head and continued: "I stopped the last hen. I asked: 'Why are you swearing, sister? And what about the picnic?' She replied: 'These Emporia people are going to give a Sunday-school picnic day after to-morrow. Meantime all us hens have to lay devilled eggs.'"

"We do not laugh at jokes about swearing," said the Mennonite driver, and climbed back on to his reaper. My partner strode solemnly out into the sun and began to pile sheaves.

Each round we study our shadows on the stubble more closely, thrilled with the feeling that noon creeps on. And now, up the road we see a bit of dust and a rig. No, it is not the woman we are looking for, but a woman with supplies for other harvesters. We work on and on, while four disappoint-

110 THE GOSPEL OF BEAUTY

ing rigs go by. At last appears a sunbonnet we know. Our especial Mennonite maid is sitting quite straight on the edge of the seat and holding the lines almost on a level with her chin. She drives through the field toward us. We motion her to the gap in the hedge.

We unhitch, and lead the mules to the gap, where she joins us. With much high-minded expostulation the men try to show the mules they should eat alfalfa and not hedge-thorns. The mules are at last tied out in the sun to a wheel of the wagon, away from temptation, with nothing but alfalfa near them.

The meal is spread with delicacy, yet there is a heap of it. With a prayer of thanksgiving, sometimes said by Tilly, sometimes by one of the men, we begin to eat. To a man in a harvest-field a square meal is more thrilling than a finely-acted play.

The thrill goes not only to the toes and the finger-tips, but to the utmost ramifications

THE FIRST HARVEST 111

of the spirit. Men indoors in offices, whose bodies actually require little, cannot think of eating enormously without thinking of sodden overeating, with condiments to rouse, and heavy meats and sweets to lull the flabby body till the last faint remnants of appetite have departed and the man is a monument of sleepy gluttony.

Eating in a harvest field is never so. Every nerve in the famished body calls frantically for reinforcements. And the nerves and soul of a man are strangely alert together. All we ate for breakfast turned to hot ashes in our hearts at eleven o'clock. I sing of the body and of the eternal soul, revived again! To feel life actually throbbing back into one's veins, life immense in passion, pulse and power, is not over-eating.

Tilly has brought us knives, and no forks. It would have been more appropriate if we had eaten from the ends of swords. We are finally recuperated from the fevers of the

112 THE GOSPEL OF BEAUTY

morning and almost strong enough for the long, long afternoon fight with the sun. Fresh water is poured from a big glittering can into the jugs we have sucked dry. Tilly reloads the buggy and is gone. After another sizzling douse of water without and within, our long afternoon pull commences.

The sun has become like a roaring lion, and we wrestle with the sheaves as though we had him by the beard. The only thing that keeps up my nerve in the dizziness is the remembrance of the old Mennonite's proverb at breakfast that as long as a man can eat and sweat he is safe. My hands inside my prickling gloves seem burning off. The wheat beards there are like red-hot needles. But I am still sweating a little in the chest, and the Mennonite boy is cheerfully singing:

“When I behold the wondrous cross
On which the Prince of Glory died,
My richest gain I count but loss
And pour contempt on all my pride.”

THE FIRST HARVEST 113

Two-thirds round the field, methinks the jig is up. Then the sun is hidden by a friend of ours in the sky, just the tiniest sort of a cloud and we march on down the rows. The merciful little whiff of dream follows the sun for half an hour.

The most terrible heat is at half-past two. Somehow we pull through till four o'clock. Then we say to ourselves: "We can stand this four-o'clock heat, because we have stood it hotter."

'Tis a grim matter of comparison. We speed up a little and trot a little as the sun reaches the top of the western hedge. A bit later the religious hired man walks home to do the chores. I sing down the rows by myself. It is glorious to work now. The endless reiterations of the day have developed a certain dancing rhythm in one's nerves, one is intoxicated with his own weariness and the conceit that comes with seizing the sun by the mane, like Sampson.

It is now that the sun gracefully acknowl-

114 THE GOSPEL OF BEAUTY

edges his defeat. He shows through the hedge as a great blur, that is all. Then he becomes a mist-wrapped golden mountain that some fairy traveller might climb in enchanted shoes. This sun of ours is no longer an enemy, but a fantasy, a vision and a dream.

Now the elderly proprietor is back on his dancing pony. He is following the hurrying reaper in a sort of ceremonial fashion, delighted to see the wheat go down so fast. At last this particular field is done. We finish with a comic-tragedy. Some little rabbits scoot, panic-stricken, from the last few yards of still-standing grain. The old gentleman on horseback and his son afoot soon out-mancœuvre the lively creatures. We have rabbit for supper at the sacrifice of considerable Mennonite calm.

It was with open rejoicing on the part of all that we finished the field nearest the house, the last one, by Saturday noon. The boy and I had our own special thrill in catch-

THE FIRST HARVEST 115

ing up with the reaper, which had passed by us so often in our rounds. As the square in mid-field grows smaller the reaper has to turn oftener, and turning uses up much more time than at first appears.

The places where the armies of wheat-sheaves are marshalled are magic places, despite their sweat and dust. There is nothing small in the panorama. All the lines of the scene are epic. The binder-twine is invisible, and has not altered the eternal classic form of the sheaf. There is a noble dignity and ease in the motion of a new reaper on a level field. A sturdy Mennonite devotee marching with a great bundle of wheat under each arm and reaching for a third makes a picture indeed, an essay on sunshine beyond the brush of any impressionist. Each returning day while riding to the field, when one has a bit of time to dream, one feels these things. One feels also the essentially partriarchal character of the harvest. One thinks of the Book of Ruth, and the Jewish

116 THE GOSPEL OF BEAUTY

feasts of ingathering. All the new Testament parables ring in one's ears, parables of sowing and reaping, of tares and good grain, of Bread and of Leaven and the story of the Disciples plucking corn. As one looks on the half-gathered treasure he thinks on the solemn words: "For the Bread of God is that which cometh down out of Heaven and giveth life unto the World," and the rest of that sermon on the Bread of Life, which has so many meanings.

This Sunday before breakfast, I could fully enter into the daily prayers, that at times had appeared merely quaint to me, and in my heart I said "Amen" to the special thanksgiving the patriarch lifted up for the gift of the fruit of the land. I was happy indeed that I had had the strength to bear my little part in the harvest of a noble and devout household, as well as a hand in the feeding of the wide world.

What I, a stranger, have done in this place, thirty thousand strangers are doing

just a little to the west. We poor tramps are helping to garner that which reestablishes the nations. If only for a little while, we have bent our backs over the splendid furrows, to save a shining gift that would otherwise rot, or vanish away.

THURSDAY AFTERNOON, JULY FOURTH, 1912. In the shadow of a lonely windmill between Raymond and Ellinwood, Kansas.

I arrived hot and ravenous at Raymond about eleven A.M. on this glorious Independence Day, having walked twelve miles facing a strange wind. At first it seemed fairly cool, because it travelled at the rate of an express train. But it was really hot and alkaline, and almost burnt me up. I had had for breakfast a cooky, some raisins and a piece of cheese, purchased with my booklet of rhymes at a grocery. By the time I reached Raymond I was fried and frantic.

The streets were deserted. I gathered from the station-master that almost every-

118 THE GOSPEL OF BEAUTY

one had gone to the Dutch picnic in the grove near Ellinwood. The returns for the Johnson-Flynn fight were to be received there beneath the trees, and a potent variety of dry-state beverage was to flow free. The unvaracious station-master declared this beverage was made of equal parts iron-rust, patent medicine and rough-on-rats, added to a barrel of brown rain-water. He appeared to be prejudiced against it.

I walked down the street. Just as I had somehow anticipated, I spied out a certain type of man. He was alone in his restaurant and I crouched my soul to spring. The only man left in town is apt to be a soft-hearted party. "Here, as sure as my name is tramp, I will wrestle with a defenceless fellow-being."

Like many a restaurant in Kansas, it was a sort of farmhand's Saturday night paradise. If a man cannot loaf in a saloon he will loaf in a restaurant. Then certain problems of demand and supply arise ac-

according to circumstances and circumlocutions.

I obtained leave for the ice-water without wrestling. I almost emptied the tank. Then, with due art, I offered to recite twenty poems to the solitary man, a square meal to be furnished at the end, if the rhymes were sufficiently fascinating.

Assuming a judicial attitude on the lunch-counter stool he put me in the arm-chair by the ice-chest and told me to unwind myself. As usual, I began with *The Proud Farmer*, *The Illinois Village* and *The Building of Springfield*, which three in series contain my whole gospel, directly or by implication. Then I wandered on through all sorts of rhyme. He nodded his head like a mandarin, at the end of each recital. Then he began to get dinner. He said he liked my poetry, and he was glad I came in, for he would feel more like getting something to eat himself. I sat on and on by the ice-chest while he prepared a meal more heating

120 THE GOSPEL OF BEAUTY

than the morning wind or the smell of fire-crackers in the street. First, for each man, a slice of fried ham large enough for a whole family. Then French fried potatoes by the platterful. Then three fried eggs apiece. There was milk with cream on top to be poured from a big granite bucket as we desired it. There was a can of beans with tomato sauce. There was sweet apple-butter. There were canned apples. There was a pot of coffee. I moved over from the ice-chest and we talked and ate till half-past one. I began to feel that I was solid as an iron man and big as a Colossus of Rhodes. I would like to report our talk, but this letter must end somewhere. I agreed with my host's opinions on everything but the temperance question. He did not believe in *total* abstinence. On that I remained non-committal. Eating as I had, how could I take a stand against my benefactor even though the issue were the immortal one of man's sinful weakness for drink? The ham

and ice water were going to my head as it was. And I could have eaten more. I could have eaten a fat Shetland pony.

My host explained that he also travelled at times, but did not carry poetry. He gave me much box-car learning. Then, curious to relate, he dug out maps and papers, and showed me how to take up a claim in Oregon, a thing I did not in the least desire to do. God bless him in basket and in store, afoot or at home.

This afternoon the ham kept on frying within me, not uncomfortably. I stopped and drank at every windmill. Now it is about four o'clock in the afternoon and I am in the shadow of one more. I have found a bottle which just fits my hip pocket which I have washed and will use as a canteen henceforth. When one knows he has his drink with him, he does not get so thirsty.

But I have put down little to show you the strange intoxication that has pervaded this whole day. The inebriating character

122 THE GOSPEL OF BEAUTY

of the air and the water and the intoxication that comes with the very sight of the wind-mills spinning alone, and the elation that comes with the companionship of the sun, and the gentleness of the occasional good Samaritans, are not easily conveyed in words. When one's spirit is just right for this sort of thing it all makes as good an Independence Day as folks are having anywhere in this United States, even at Ellinwood.

THURSDAY, JULY 5, 1912. In the office of the Ellinwood livery stable in the morning.

Everyone came home drunk from the Dutch picnic last night. Ellinwood roared and Ellinwood snorted. I reached the place from the east just as the noisy revellers arrived from the south.

Ellinwood is an old German town full of bar-rooms, forced by the sentiment of the dry voters in surrounding territory to turn into restaurants, but only of late. The bar-

fixtures are defiantly retained. Ever and anon Ellinwood takes to the woods with malicious intent.

Many of the citizens were in a mad-dog fury because Flynn had not licked Johnson. This town seems to be of the opinion that that battle was important. The proprietor of the most fashionable hotel monopolized the 'phone on his return from the woods. He called up everybody in town. His conversation was always the same. "What'd ya think of the fight?" And without waiting for answer: "I'll bet one hundred thousand dollars that Flynn can lick Johnson in a fair fight. It's a disgrace to this nation that black rascal kin lay hands on a white man. I'll bet a hundred thousand dollars. . . . A hundred thousand dollars . . .," etc.

I sat a long time waiting for him to get through. At last I put in my petition at another hostelry. This host was intoxicated, but gentle. In exchange for what I call the

124 THE GOSPEL OF BEAUTY

squarest kind of a meal I recited the most cooling verses I knew to a somewhat distracted, rather alcoholic company of harvest hands. First I recited a poem in praise of Lincoln and then one in praise of the uplifting influence of the village church. Then, amid qualified applause, I distributed my tracts, and retreated to this stable for the night.

KANSAS

*O, I have walked in Kansas
Through many a harvest field
And piled the sheaves of glory there
And down the wild rows reeled:*

*Each sheaf a little yellow sun,
A heap of hot-rayed gold;
Each binder like Creation's hand
To mould suns, as of old.*

*Straight overhead the orb of noon
Beat down with brimstone breath:
The desert wind from south and west
Was blistering flame and death.*

THE FIRST HARVEST 125

*Yet it was gay in Kansas,
'A-fighting that strong sun;
And I and many a fellow-tramp
Defied that wind and won.*

*And we felt free in Kansas
From any sort of fear,
For thirty thousand tramps like us
There harvest every year.*

*She stretches arms for them to come,
She roars for helpers then,
And so it is in Kansas
That tramps, one month, are men.*

*We sang in burning Kansas
The songs of Sabbath-school,
The "Day Star" flashing in the East,
The "Vale of Eden" cool.*

*We sang in splendid Kansas
"The flag that set us free"—
That march of fifty thousand men
With Sherman to the sea.*

*We feasted high in Kansas
And had much milk and meat.
The tables groaned to give us power
Wherewith to save the wheat.*

126 THE GOSPEL OF BEAUTY

*Our beds were sweet alfalfa hay
Within the barn-loft wide.
The loft doors opened out upon
The endless wheat-field tide.*

*I loved to watch the wind-mills spin
And watch that big moon rise.
I dreamed and dreamed with lids half-shut,
The moonlight in my eyes.*

*For all men dream in Kansas
By noonday and by night,
By sunrise yellow, red and wild
And moonrise wild and white.*

*The wind would drive the glittering clouds,
The cottonwoods would croon,
And past the sheaves and through the leaves
Came whispers from the moon.*

V

In Kansas: the Second and Third Harvest

TWO miles north of Great Bend. In the heart of the greatest wheat country in America, and in the midst of the harvest-time, Sunday, July 7, 1912.

I am meditating on the ways of Destiny. It seems to me I am here, not altogether by chance. But just why I am here, time must reveal.

Last Friday I had walked the ten miles from Ellinwood to Great Bend by 9 A.M. I went straight to the general delivery, where a package of tracts and two or three weeks' mail awaited me. I read about half through the letter-pile as I sat on a rickety bench in the public square. Some very loud-mouthed negroes were playing horse-shoe obstreper-

128 THE GOSPEL OF BEAUTY

ously. I began to wish Flynn had whipped Johnson. I was thinking of getting away from there, when two white men, evidently harvesters, sat down near me and diluted the color scheme.

One man said: "Harvest-wages this week are from two dollars and fifty cents up to four dollars. We are experienced men and worth three dollars and fifty cents." Then a German farmer came and negotiated with them in vain. He wanted to hold them down to three dollars apiece. He had his automobile to take his crew away that morning.

Then a fellow in citified clothes came to me and asked: "Can you follow a reaper and shock?" I said: "*Show me the wheat.*" So far as I remember, it is the first time in my life anyone ever hunted me out and *asked* me to work for him. He put me into his buggy and drove me about two miles north to this place, just the region John Humphrey told me to find, though he did not specify this farm. I was offered \$2.50 and

THE SECOND HARVEST 129

keep, as the prophet foretold. The man who drove me out has put his place this year into the hands of a tenant who is my direct boss. I may not be able to last out, but all is well so far. I have made an acceptable hand, keeping up with the reaper by myself, and I feel something especial awaits me. But the reaper breaks down so often I do not know whether I can keep up with it without help when it begins going full-speed.

These people do not attend church like the Mennonites. The tenant wanted me to break the Sabbath and help him in the alfalfa to-day. He suggested that neither he nor I was so narrow-minded or superstitious as to be a "Sunday man." Besides he couldn't work the alfalfa at all without one more hand. I did not tell him so, but I felt I needed all Sunday to catch up on my tiredness. I suspect that my refusal to violate the Sabbath vexed him.

There has been a terrible row of some kind going on behind the barn all afternoon.

130 THE GOSPEL OF BEAUTY

Maybe he is working off his vexation. At last the tenant's wife has gone out to "see about that racket." Now she comes in. She tells me they have been trying to break a horse.

The same farm, two miles north of Great Bend, July 8, 1912.

How many times in the counties further back I have asked with fear and misgiving for permission to work in the alfalfa, and have been repulsed when I confessed to the lack of experience! And now this morning I have pitched alfalfa hay with the best of them. We had to go to work early while the dew softened the leaves. It is a kind of clover. Once perfectly dry, the leaves crumble off when the hay is shaken. Then we must quit. The leaves are the nourishing part.

The owner of the place, the citified party who drove me out here the other day and who is generally back in town, was on top

THE SECOND HARVEST 131

of that stack this morning, his collar off, his town shirt and pants somewhat the worse for the exertion. He puffed like a porpoise, for he was putting in place all the hay we men handed up to him. We lifted the alfalfa in a long bundle, using our three forks at one time. We worked like drilled soldiers, then went in to early dinner.

This is a short note written while the binder takes the necessary three turns round the new wheatfield that the tenant's brother and I are starting to conquer this afternoon. Three swaths of four bundles each must be cut, then I will start on my rounds, piling them into shocks of twelve bundles each.

I am right by the R. F. D. box that goes with this farm. I will put up the little tin flag that signals the postman. One of the four beasts hitched to the reaper is a broncho colt who came dancing to the field this afternoon, refusing to keep his head in line with the rest of the steeds, and, as a consequence, pulling the whole reaper. It transpires that

132 THE GOSPEL OF BEAUTY

the row in the horselot Sunday was caused by this colt. He jumped up and left his hoof-print on the chest of the man now driving him. So the two men tied him up and beat him all afternoon with a double-tree, cursing him between whacks, lashing themselves with Kansas whisky to keep up steam. Yet he comes dancing to the field.

On the farm two miles north of Great Bend, Wednesday evening, July 10, 1912.

I must write you a short note to-night while the rest are getting ready for supper. I will try to mail it to-morrow morning on the way to the wheat. Let me assure you that your letter will be heeded. I know pretty well, by this time, what I can stand, but if I feel the least bit unfit I will not go into the sun. That is my understanding with the tenant who runs the farm. I can eat and sweat like a Mennonite. I sleep like a top and wake up fresh as a little daisy. So far I have gone dancing to the field as

THE SECOND HARVEST 133

the broncho did. But the broncho is a poor illustration. He is dead.

The broncho was the property of a little boy, the son of the man who owns the farm. The little boy had started with a lamb and raised it, then sold it for chickens, increasing his capital by trading and feeding till it was all concentrated to buy this colt. Then he and his people moved to town and left the colt, just at the breaking age, to be trained for a boy's pet by these men. Since he became obstreperous, they thought hitching him to the reaper would cure him, leaving a draught-horse in the barn to make place for the unruly one.

The tenant's brother, who drove the reaper, sent word to the little boy he had not the least idea what ailed Dick. He hinted to me later that whatever killed him must have come from some disease in his head.

Yes, it came from his head. That double-tree and that pitchfork handle probably missed his ribs once or twice and hit him

134 THE GOSPEL OF BEAUTY

somewhere around his eyes, in the course of the Sabbath afternoon services. Two whiskey-lashed colt-breakers can do wonders without trying. I have been assured that this is the only way to subdue the beasts, that law and order must assert themselves or the whole barnyard will lead an industrial rebellion. It is past supper now. I have been writing till the lamp is dim. I must go to my quilts in the hay.

To-day was the only time the reaper did not break down every half hour for repairs. So it was one continuous dance for me and my friend the broncho till about three o'clock in the afternoon, when the sun really did its best. Then the broncho went crazy. He shoved his head over the backs of two mules twice his size, and almost pushed them into the teeth of the sickle.

He was bleeding at the mouth and his eyes almost popped out of his head. He had hardly an inch of hide that was whole, and his raw places were completely covered with

Kansas flies. And the hot winds have made the flies so ravenous they draw blood from the back of the harvester's hand the moment they alight.

The broncho began to kick in all four directions at once. He did one good thing. He pulled the callouses off the hands of the tenant's brother, the driver, who still gripped the lines but surrendered his pride and yelled for me to help. I am as afraid of bronchos and mules as I am of buzz saws. Yet we separated the beasts somehow, the mules safely hitched to the fence, the broncho between us, held by two halter-ropes.

There was no reasoning with Dick. He was dying, and dying game. One of the small boys appeared just then and carried the alarm. Soon a more savage and indomitable man with a more eloquent tongue, the tenant himself, had my end of the rope. But not the most formidable cursing could stop Dick from bleeding at the mouth. Later the draught horse whose place he had

136 THE GOSPEL OF BEAUTY

taken was brought over from his pleasant rest in the barn and the two were tied head to head. The lordly tenant started to lead them toward home. But Dick fell down and died as soon as he reached a patch of unploughed prairie grass, which, I think, was the proper end for him. The peaceful draught horse was put in his place.

The reaper went back to work. The reaper cut splendidly the rest of this afternoon. As for me I never shocked wheat with such machine-like precision. I went at a dog-trot part of the time, and almost caught up with the machine.

The broncho should not have been called Dick. He should have been called Daniel Boone, or Davy Crockett or Custer or Richard, yes, Richard the Lion-Hearted. He came dancing to the field this morning, between the enormous overshadowing mules, and dancing feebly this noon. He pulled the whole reaper till three o'clock. I remember I asked the driver at noon what made

THE SECOND HARVEST 137

the broncho dance. He answered: "The flies on his ribs, I suppose."

I fancy Dick danced because he was made to die dancing, just as the Spartans rejoiced and combed their long hair preparing to face certain death at Thermopylæ.

I think I want on my coat of arms a broncho, rampant.

THURSDAY, JULY 11, 1912. Great Bend, Kansas.

Yesterday I could lift three moderate-sized sheaves on the run. This morning I could hardly lift one, walking. This noon the foreman of the ranch, the man who, with his brother, disciplined the broncho, was furiously angry with me, because, as I plainly explained, I was getting too much sun and wanted a bit of a rest. He inquired, "Why didn't you tell me two days ago you were going to be overcome by the heat, so I could have had a man ready to take your place?" Also, "It's no wonder dirty homeless men

138 THE GOSPEL OF BEAUTY

are walking around the country looking for jobs." Also, a little later: "I have my opinion of any man on earth who is a quitter."

But I kept my serenity and told him that under certain circumstances I was apt to be a quitter, though, of course, I did not like to overdo the quitting business. I remained unruffled, as I say, and handed him and his brother copies of *The Gospel of Beauty* and *Rhymes to Be Traded for Bread* and bade them good-bye. Then I went to town and told the local editor on them for their horse-killing, which, I suppose, was two-faced of me.

The tenant's attitude was perfectly absurd. Hands are terribly scarce. A half day's delay in shocking that wheat would not have hurt it, or stopped the reaper, or altered any of the rest of the farm routine. He fired me without real hope of a substitute. I was working for rock-bottom wages and willing to have them docked all he

THE SECOND HARVEST 139

pleased if he would only give me six hours to catch up in my tiredness.

Anyway, here I am in the Saddlerock Hotel, to which I have paid in advance a bit of my wages, in exchange for one night's rest. I enclose the rest to you. I will start out on the road to-morrow, bathed, clean, dead broke and fancy free. I have made an effort to graduate from beggary into the respectable laboring class, which you have so often exhorted me to do.

I shall try for employment again, as soon as I rest up a bit. I enjoyed the wheat and the second-hand reaper, and the quaintness of my employers and all till the death of Richard the Lion-Hearted.

I am wondering whether I ought to be as bitter as I am against the horse-killers. We cannot have green fields just for bronchos to gambol in, or roads where they can trot unharnessed and nibble by the way. We must have Law and Order and Discipline.

But, thanks to the Good St. Francis who

140 THE GOSPEL OF BEAUTY

marks out my path for me, I start to-morrow morning to trot unharnessed once again.

SUNDAY, JULY 14, 1912. In front of the general store at Wright, Kansas, which same is as small as a town can get.

I have been wondering why Destiny sent me to that farm where the horse-killers flourished. I suppose it was that Dick might have at least one mourner. All the world's heroes are heroes because they had the qualities of constancy and dancing gameness that brought him to his death.

Some day I shall hunt up the right kind of a Hindu and pay him filthy gold and have him send the ghost of Dick to those wretched men. They will be unable to move, lying with eyes a-staring all night long. Dreadful things will happen in that room, dreadful things the Hindu shall devise after I have told him what the broncho endured. They shall wake in the morning, thinking it all a dream till they behold the horse-shoe

prints all over the counterpane. Then they will try to sit up and find that their ribs are broken—well, I will leave it to the Hindu.

I have been waiting many hours at this town of Wright. To-day and yesterday I made seventy-six miles. Thirty-five of these miles I made yesterday in the automobile of the genial and scholarly Father A. P. Heimann of Kinsley, who took me as far as that point. I have been loafing here at Wright since about four in the afternoon. It is nearly dark now. Dozens of harvesters, already engaged for the week, have been hanging about and the two stores have kept open to accommodate them. There is a man to meet me here at eight o'clock. I may harvest for him four days. I told him I would not promise for longer. He has taken the train to a station further east to try to get some men for all week. If he does not return with a full quota he will take me on. While I am perfectly willing

142 THE GOSPEL OF BEAUTY

to work for two dollars and a half, many hold out for three.

The man I am waiting for overtook me two miles east of this place. He was hurrying to catch his train. He took me into his rig and made the bargain. He turned his horse over to me and raced for the last car as we neared the station. So here I am a few yards from the depot, in front of the general store, watching the horse of an utter stranger. Of course the horse isn't worth stealing, and his harness is half twine and wire. But the whole episode is so careless and free and Kansas-like.

Most of the crowd have gone, and I am awfully hungry. I might steal off the harness in the dark, and eat it. Somehow I have not quite the nerve to beg where I expect to harvest. I am afraid to try again in this fight with the sun, yet when a man overtakes me in the road and trusts me with his best steed and urges me to work for him, I hardly know how to refuse.

THE THIRD HARVEST 143

SUNDAY AFTERNOON, JULY 21, 1912.

Loafing and dozing on my bed in the granary on the farm near Wright, Kansas, where I have been harvesting a full week.

The man I waited for last Sunday afternoon returned with his full quota of hands on the "Plug" train about nine o'clock. Where was I to sleep? I began to think about a lumber pile I had seen, when I discovered that five other farmers had climbed off that train. They were poking around in all the dark corners for men just like me. I engaged with a German named Louis Lix for the whole week, all the time shaking with misgivings from the memory of my last break-down. Here it is, Sunday, before I know it. Lix wants me back again next year, and is sorry I will not work longer. I have totalled about sixteen days of harvesting in Kansas, and though I sagged in the middle I think I have ended in fair style. Enclosed find all my wages except enough for one day's stay at Dodge City and three

144 THE GOSPEL OF BEAUTY

real hotel meals there—sherbet and cheese and crackers, and finger bowls at the end, and all such folly. Harvest eating is grand in its way but somehow lacks frills. Ah, if eating were as much in my letters as in my thoughts, this would be nothing but a series of menus!

I have helped Lix harvest barley, oats and wheat, mainly wheat. This is the world of wheat. In this genial region one can stand on a soap-box and see nothing else to the horizon. Walking the Santa Fé Trail beside the railroad means walking till the enormous wheat-elevator behind one disappears because of the curvature of the earth, like the ships in the geography picture, and walking on and on till finally in the west the top of another elevator appears, being gradually revealed because this earth is not flat like a table, but, as the geography says, curved like an apple or an orange.

In these fields, instead of working a reaper with a sickle eight feet long, they

work a header with a twelve-foot sickle. Instead of four horses to this machine, there are six. Instead of one man or two following behind to the left of the driver to pile sheaves into shocks, a barge, a most copious slatted receptacle, drives right beside the header, catching the unbound wheat which is thrown up loosely by the machine. One pitchfork man in the barge spreads this cataract of headed wheat so a full load can be taken in. His partner guides the team, keeping precisely with the header.

But these two bargemen do not complete the outfit. Two others with their barge or "header-box" come up behind as soon as the first box starts over to the stack to be unloaded. Here the sixth man, the stacker, receives it, and piles it into a small mountain nicely calculated to resist cyclones. The green men are broken in as bargemen. The stacker is generally an old hand.

Unloading the wheat is the hardest part of the bargeman's work. His fork must

146 THE GOSPEL OF BEAUTY

be full and he must be fast. Otherwise his partner, who takes turns driving and filling, and who helps to pitch the wheat out, will have more than half the pitching to do. And all the time will be used up. Neither man will have a rest-period while waiting for the other barge to come up. This rest-period is the thing toward which we all wrestle. If we save it out we drink from the water-jugs in the corner of the wagon. We examine where the grasshoppers have actually bitten little nicks out of our pitchfork handles, nicks that are apt to make blisters. We tell our adventures and, when the header breaks down, and must be tinkered endlessly, and we have a grand rest, the stacker sings a list of the most amazing cowboy songs. He is a young man, yet rode the range here for seven years before it became wheat-country. One day when the songs had become hopelessly, prosaically pornographic I yearned for a

THE THIRD HARVEST 147

change. I quoted the first stanza of *Atalanta's* chorus:

“When the hounds of Spring are on Winter’s traces,
The mother of months, in meadow or plain,
Fills the shadows and windy places
With lisp of leaves and ripple of rain——”

The stacker asked for more. I finished the chorus. Then I repeated it several times, while the header was being mended. We had to get to work. The next morning when my friend climbed into our barge to ride to the field he began:

“ ‘When the hounds of Spring are on Winter’s traces,
The mother of months, in meadow or plain,
Fills the shadows——’

“Dammit, what’s the rest of it? I’ve been trying to recite that piece all night.”

Now he has the first four stanzas. And last evening he left for Dodge City to stay overnight and Sunday. He was resolved to purchase *Atalanta in Calydon* and find in

148 THE GOSPEL OF BEAUTY

the Public Library *The Lady of Shalot* and *The Blessed Damsel*, besides paying the usual visit to his wife and children.

Working in a header-barge is fun, more fun than shocking wheat, even when one is working for a Mennonite boss. The crew is larger. There is occasional leisure to be social. There is more cool wind, for one is higher in the air. There is variety in the work. One drives about a third of the time, guides the wheat into the header a third of the time and empties the barge a third of the time. The emptying was the back-breaking work.

And I was all the while fearful, lest, from plain awkwardness, or shaking from weariness, I should stick some man in the eye with my pitchfork. But I did not. I came nearer to being a real harvester every day. The last two days my hands were so hard I could work without gloves, this despite the way the grasshoppers had chewed the fork-handle.

THE THIRD HARVEST 149

Believe everything you have ever heard of the Kansas grasshoppers.

The heights of the header-barge are dramatically commanding. Kansas appears much larger than when we are merely standing in the field. We are just as high as upon a mountain-peak, for here, as there, we can see to the very edges of the eternities.

Now let me tell you of a new kind of weather.

Clouds thicken overhead. The wind turns suddenly cold. We shiver while we work. We are liable in five minutes to a hailstorm, a terrific cloudburst or a cyclone. The horses are unhitched. The barges are tied end to end. And *still* the barges may be blown away. They must be anchored even more safely. The long poles to lock the wheels are thrust under the bed through the spokes. It has actually been my duty to put this pole in the wheels every evening to keep the barges from being blown out of the barn-lot at night. Such is the accustomed

150 THE GOSPEL OF BEAUTY

weather excitement in Kansas. Just now we have excitement that is unusual. But as the storm is upon us it splits and passes to the north and south. There is not a drop of rain.

We are at work again in ten minutes. In two hours the sky is clear and the air is hot and alkaline. And ten thousand grasshoppers are glad to see that good old hot wind again, you may believe. They are preening themselves, each man in his place on the slats of the barge. They are enjoying their chewing tobacco the same as ever.

Wheat, wheat, wheat, wheat! States and continents and oceans and solar-systems of wheat! We poor ne'er-do-weels take our little part up there in the header half way between the sky and the earth, and in the evening going home, carrying Mister Stacker-Man in our barge, we sing *Sweet Rosy O'Grady* and the *Battle Hymn of the Republic*. And the most emphatic and unadulterated tramp among us harvesters, a

giant Swiss fifty years old, gives the yodel he learned when a boy.

This is a German Catholic family for which I have been working. We have had grace before and after every meal, and we crossed ourselves before and after every meal, except the Swiss, who left the table early to escape being blest too much.

My employers are good folk, good as the Mennonites. My boss was absolutely on the square all the week, as kind as a hard-working man has time to be. It gave me great satisfaction to go to Mass with him this morning. Though some folks talk against religion, though it sometimes appears to be a nuisance, after weighing all the evidence of late presented, I prefer a religious farmer.

152 THE GOSPEL OF BEAUTY

HERE'S TO THE SPIRIT OF FIRE

*Here's to the spirit of fire, wherever the flame is unfurled,
In the sun, it may be, as a torch, to lead on and enlighten the world;
That melted the glacial streams, in the day that no memories reach,
That shimmered in amber and shell and weed on the earliest beach;
The genius of love and of life, the power that will ever abound,
That waits in the bones of the dead, who sleep till the judgment shall sound.
Here's to the spirit of fire, when clothed in swift music it comes,
The glow of the harvesting songs, the voice of the national drums;
The whimsical, various fire, in the rhymes and ideas of men,
Buried in books for an age, exploding and writhing again,
And blown a red wind round the world, consuming the lies in its mirth,
Then locked in dark volumes for long, and buried like coal in the earth.
Here's to the comforting fire in the joys of the blind and the meek,*

THE THIRD HARVEST 153

*In the customs of letterless lands, in the thoughts
of the stupid and weak.*

*In the weariest legends they tell, in their cruellest,
coldest belief,*

*In the proverbs of counter or till, in the arts of the
priest or the thief.*

*Here's to the spirit of fire, that never the ocean can
drown,*

*That glows in the phosphorent wave, and gleams in
the sea-rose's crown;*

*That sleeps in the sunbeam and mist, that creeps as
the wise can but know,*

*A wonder, an incense, a whim, a perfume, a fear and
a glow,*

*Ensnaring the stars with a spell, and holding the
earth in a net,*

*Yea, filling the nations with prayer, wherever man's
pathway is set.*

VI

The End of the Road; Moonshine; and Some Proclamations

AUGUST 1, 1912. Standing up at the Postoffice desk, Pueblo, Colorado.

Several times since going over the Colorado border I have had such a cordial reception for the Gospel of Beauty that my faith in this method of propaganda is reawakened. I confess to feeling a new zeal. But there are other things I want to tell in this letter.

I have begged my way from Dodge City on, dead broke, and keeping all the rules of the road. I have been asked dozens of times by frantic farmers to help them at various tasks in western Kansas and eastern Colorado. I have regretfully refused all

but half-day jobs, having firmly resolved not to harvest again till I have well started upon a certain spiritual enterprise, namely, the writing of certain new poems that have taken possession of me in this high altitude, despite the physical stupidity that comes with strenuous walking. Thereby hangs a tale that I have not room for here.

Resolutely setting aside all recent wonders, I have still a few impressions of the wheatfield to record. Harvesting time in Kansas is such a distinctive institution! Whole villages that are dead any other season blossom with new rooming signs, fifty cents a room, or when two beds are in a room, twenty-five cents a bed. The eating counters are generally separate from these. The meals are almost uniformly twenty-five cents each. The fact that Kansas has no bar-rooms makes these shabby food-sodden places into near-taverns, the main assembly halls for men wanting to be hired, or those spending their coin. Famous villages where

156 THE GOSPEL OF BEAUTY

an enormous amount of money changes hands in wages and the sale of wheat-crops are thus nothing but marvellous lines of dirty restaurants. In front of the dingy hotels are endless ancient chairs. Summer after summer fidgety, sun-fevered, sticky harvesters have gossiped from chair to chair or walked toward the dirty band-stand in the public square, sure, as of old, to be encountered by the anxious farmer, making up his crew.

A few harvesters are seen, carrying their own bedding; grasshopper bitten quilts with all their colors flaunting and their cotton gushing out, held together by a shawl-strap or a rope. Almost every harvester has a shabby suit-case of the paste-board variety banging round his ankles. When wages are rising the harvester, as I have said before, holds out for the top price. The poor farmer walks round and round the village half a day before he consents to the three dollars. Stacker's wages may be three to five simo-

THE END OF THE ROAD 157

leons and the obdurate farmer may have to consent to the five lest his wheat go to seed on the ground. It is a hard situation for a class that is constitutionally tightwad, often wisely so.

The roundhouses, water tanks, and all other places where men stealing freight rides are apt to pass, have enticing cards tacked on or near them by the agents of the mayors of the various towns, giving average wages, number of men wanted, and urging all harvesters good and true to come to some particular town between certain dates. The multitude of these little cards keeps the harvester on the alert, and, as the saying is: "Independent as a hog on ice."

To add to the farmer's distractions, still fresher news comes by word of mouth that three hundred men are wanted in a region two counties to the west, at fifty cents more a day. It sweeps through the harvesters' hotels, and there is a great banging of suitcases, and the whole town is rushing for the

158 THE GOSPEL OF BEAUTY

train. Then there is indeed a nabbing of men at the station, and sudden surrender on the part of the farmers, before it is too late.

Harvesting season is inevitably placarded and dated too soon in one part of the State, and not soon enough in another. Kansas weather does not produce its results on schedule. This makes not one, but many hurry-calls. It makes the real epic of the muscle-market.

Stand with me at the station. Behold the trains rushing by, hour after hour, freight-cars and palace cars of dishevelled men! The more elegant the equipage the more do they put their feet on the seats. Behold a saturnalia of chewing tobacco and sunburn and hairy chests, disturbing the primness and crispness of the Santa Fé, jostling the tourist and his lovely daughter.

They are a happy-go-lucky set. They have the reverse of the tightwad's vices. The harvester, alas, is harvested. Gamblers lie in wait for him. The scarlet woman has her

pit dugged and ready. It is fun for the police to lock him up and fine him. No doubt he often deserves it. I sat half an afternoon in one of these towns and heard the local undertaker tell horrible stories of friendless field hands with no kinsfolk anywhere discoverable, sunstruck and buried in a day or so by the county. One man's story he told in great detail. The fellow had complained of a headache, and left the field. He fell dead by the roadside on the way to the house. He was face downward in an ant hill. He was eaten into an unrecognizable mass before they found him at sunset. The undertaker expatiated on how hard it was to embalm such folks. It was a discourse marshalled with all the wealth of detail one reads in *The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar*.

The harvester is indeed harvested. He gambles with sunstroke, disease and damnation. In one way or another the money trickles from his loose fingers, and he drifts

160 THE GOSPEL OF BEAUTY

from the wheat in Oklahoma north to the wheat in Nebraska. He goes to Canada to shock wheat there as the season recedes, and then, perhaps, turns on his tracks and makes for Duluth, Minnesota, we will say. He takes up lumbering. Or he may make a circuit of the late fruit crops of Colorado and California. He is, pretty largely, so much crude, loose, ungoverned human strength, more useful than wise. Looked at closely, he may be the boy from the machine-shop, impatient for ready money, the farmer failure turned farm-hand, the bank-clerk or machine-shop mechanic tired of slow pay, or the college student on a lark, in more or less incognito. He may be the intermittent criminal, the gay-cat or the travelling religious crank, or the futile tract-distributer.

And I was three times fraternally accosted by harvesters who thought my oil-cloth package of poems was a kit of

burglar's tools. It *is* a system of breaking in, I will admit.

A STORY LEFT OUT OF THE LETTERS

This ends the section of my letters home that in themselves make a consecutive story. But to finish with a bit of a nosegay, and show one of the unexpected rewards of troubadouring, let me tell the tale of the Five Little Children Eating Mush.

One should not be so vain as to recount a personal triumph. Still this is a personal triumph. And I shall tell it with all pride and vanity. Let those who dislike a conceited man drop the book right here.

I had walked all day straight west from Rocky Ford. It was pitch dark, threatening rain—the rain that never comes. It was nearly ten o'clock. At six I had entered a village, but had later resolved to press on to visit a man to whom I had a letter of intro-

162 THE GOSPEL OF BEAUTY

duction from my loyal friend Dr. Barbour of Rocky Ford.

There had been a wash-out. I had to walk around it, and was misdirected by the good villagers and was walking merrily on toward nowhere. Around nine o'clock I had been refused lodging at three different shanties. But from long experience I knew that something would turn up in a minute. And it did.

I walked right into the fat sides of a big country hotel on that interminable plain. It was not surrounded by a village. It was simply a clean hostelrie for the transient hands who worked at irrigating in that region.

I asked the looming figure I met in the dark: "Where is the boss of this place?"

"I am the boss." He had a Scandinavian twist to his tongue.

"I want a night's lodging. I will give in exchange an entertainment this evening, or half a day's work to-morrow."

"Come in."

I followed him up the outside stairway to the dining-room in the second story. There was his wife, a woman who greeted me cheerfully in the Scandinavian accent. She was laughing at her five little children who were laughing at her and eating their mush and milk.

Presumably the boarders had been delayed by their work, and had dined late. The children were at it still later.

They were real Americans, those little birds. And they had memories like parrots, as will appear.

"Wife," said the landlord, "here is a man that will entertain us to-night for his keep, or work for us to-morrow. I think we will take the entertainment to-night. Go ahead, mister. Here are the kids. Now listen, kids."

To come out of the fathomless, friendless dark and, almost in an instant, to look into such expectant fairy faces! They were

laughing, laughing, laughing, not in mockery, but companionship. I recited every child-piece I had ever written—(not many).

They kept quite still till the end of each one. Then they pounded the table for more, with their tin spoons and their little red fists.

So, with misgivings, I began to recite some of my fairy-tales for grown-ups. I spoke slowly, to make the externals of each story plain. The audience squealed for more. . . . I decided to recite six jingles about the moon, that I had written long ago: How the Hyæna said the Moon was a Golden Skull, and how the Shepherd Dog contradicted him and said it was a Candle in the Sky—and all that and all that.

The success of the move was remarkable because I had never pleased either grown folks or children to any extent with those verses. But these children, through the accumulated excitements of a day that I knew

THE END OF THE ROAD 165

nothing about, were in an ecstatic imaginative condition of soul that transmuted everything.

The last of the series recounted what Grandpa Mouse said to the Little Mice on the Moon question. I arranged the ketchup bottle on the edge of the table for Grandpa Mouse. I used the salts and peppers for the little mice in circle round. I used a black hat or so for the swooping, mouse-eating owls that came down from the moon. Having acted out the story first, I recited it, slowly, mind you. Here it is:

WHAT GRANDPA MOUSE SAID

“The moon’s a holy owl-queen:
She keeps them in a jar
Under her arm till evening,
Then sallies forth to war.

She pours the owls upon us:
They hoot with horrid noise
And eat the naughty mousie-girls
And wicked mousie-boys.

166 THE GOSPEL OF BEAUTY

So climb the moon-vine every night
And to the owl-queen pray:
Leave good green cheese by moonlit trees
For her to take away.

And never squeak, my children,
Nor gnaw the smoke-house door.
The owl-queen then will then love us
And send her birds no more."

At the end I asked for my room and retired. I slept maybe an hour. I was awakened by those tireless little rascals racing along the dark hall and saying in horrible solemn tones, pretending to scare one another:

"The moon's a holy owl-queen:
She keeps them in a jar
Under her arm till night,
Then 'allies out to war!
She sicks the owls upon us,
They 'OOT with 'orrid noise
And eat . . . the naughty boys,
And the MOON'S A HOLY OWL-QUEEN!
SHE KEEPS THEM IN A JAR!"

THE END OF THE ROAD 167

And so it went on, over and over.

Thereupon I made a mighty and a rash resolve. I renewed that same resolve in the morning when I woke. I said within myself "*I shall write one hundred Poems on the Moon!*"

Of course I did not keep my resolve to write one hundred pieces about the moon. But here are a few of those I did write immediately after:

THE FLUTE OF THE LONELY

[To the tune of Gaily the Troubadour.]

Faintly the ne'er-do-well
Breathed through his flute:
All the tired neighbor-folk,
Hearing, were mute.
In their neat doorways sat,
Labors all done,
Helpless, relaxed, o'er-wrought,
Evening begun.

None of them there beguiled
Work-thoughts away,

168 THE GOSPEL OF BEAUTY

Like to this reckless, wild
Loafer by day.
(Weeds in his flowers upgrown!
Fences awry!
Rubbish and bottles heaped!
Yard like a sty!)

There in his lonely door,
Leering and lean,
Staggering, liquor-stained,
Outlawed, obscene——
Played he his moonlight thought,
Mastered his flute.
All the tired neighbor-folk,
Hearing, were mute.
None but he, in that block,
Knew such a tune.
All loved the strain, and all
Looked at the moon!

THE SHIELD OF FAITH

The full moon is the Shield of Faith,
And when it hangs on high
Another shield seems on my arm
The hard world to defy.

THE END OF THE ROAD 169

Yea, when the moon has knighted me,
Then every poisoned dart
Of daytime memory turns away
From my dream-armored heart.

The full moon is the Shield of Faith:
As long as it shall rise,
I know that Mystery comes again,
That Wonder never dies.

I know that Shadow has its place,
That Noon is not our goal,
That Heaven has non-official hours
To soothe and mend the soul;

That witchcraft can be angel-craft
And wizard deeds sublime;
That utmost darkness bears a flower,
Though long the budding-time.

THE ROSE OF MIDNIGHT

[What the Gardener's Daughter Said]

The moon is now an opening flower,
The sky a cliff of blue.
The moon is now a silver rose;
Her pollen is the dew.

170 THE GOSPEL OF BEAUTY

Her pollen is the mist that swings
Across her face of dreams:
Her pollen is the faint cold light
That through the garden streams.

All earth is but a passion-flower
With blood upon his crown.
And what shall fill his failing veins
And lift his head, bowed down?

This cup of peace, this silver rose
Bending with fairy breath
Shall lift that passion-flower, the earth,
A million times from Death!

THE PATH IN THE SKY

I sailed a little shallop
Upon a pretty sea
In blue and hazy mountains,
Scarce mountains unto me;
Their summits lost in wonder,
They wrapped the lake around,
And when my shallop landed
I trod on a vague ground,

And climbed and climbed toward heaven,
Though scarce before my feet
I found one step unveiled there

THE END OF THE ROAD 171

The blue-haze vast, complete,
Until I came to Zion
The gravel paths of God:
My endless trail pierced the thick veil
To flaming flowers and sod.
I rested, looked behind me
And saw where I had been.
My little lake. It was the moon.
Sky-mountains closed it in.

PROCLAMATIONS

Immediately upon my return from my journey the following Proclamations were printed in Farm and Fireside, through the great kindness of the editors, as another phase of the same crusade.

A PROCLAMATION OF BALM IN GILEAD

GO to the fields, O city laborers, till your wounds are healed. Forget the street-cars, the skyscrapers, the slums, the Marseillaise song.

172 THE GOSPEL OF BEAUTY

We proclaim to the broken-hearted, still able to labor, the glories of the ploughed land. The harvests are wonderful. And there is a spiritual harvest appearing. A great agricultural flowering of art and song is destined soon to appear. Where corn and wheat are growing, men are singing the psalms of David, not the Marseillaise.

You to whom the universe has become a blast-furnace, a coke-oven, a cinder-strewn freight-yard, to whom the history of all ages is a tragedy with the climax now, to whom our democracy and our flag are but play-things of the hypocrite,—turn to the soil, turn to the earth, your mother, and she will comfort you. Rest, be it ever so little, from your black broodings. Think with the farmer once more, as your fathers did. Revere with the farmer our centuries-old civilization, however little it meets the city's trouble. Revere the rural customs that have their roots in the immemorial benefits of nature.

THE END OF THE ROAD 173

With the farmer look again upon the Constitution as something brought by Providence, prepared for by the ages. Go to church, the cross-roads church, and say the Lord's Prayer again. Help them with their temperance crusade. It is a deeper matter than you think. Listen to the laughter of the farmer's children. Know that not all the earth is a-weeping. Know that so long as there is black soil deep on the prairie, so long as grass will grow on it, we have a vast green haven.

The roots of some of our trees are still in the earth. Our mountains need not to be moved from their places. Wherever there is tillable land, there is a budding and blooming of old-fashioned Americanism, which the farmer is making splendid for us against the better day.

There is perpetual balm in Gilead, and many city workmen shall turn to it and be healed. This by faith, and a study of the signs, we proclaim!

PROCLAMATION

*Of the New Time for Farmers and the New
New England*

LET it be proclaimed and shouted over all the ploughlands of the United States that the same ripening that brought our first culture in New England one hundred years ago is taking place in America to-day. Every State is to have its Emerson, its Whittier, its Longfellow, its Hawthorne and the rest.

Our Puritan farmer fathers in our worthiest handful of States waited long for their first group of burnished, burning lamps. From the landing of the Pilgrims in 1620 to the delivery of Emerson's address on the American Scholar was a weary period of gestation well rewarded.

Therefore, let us be thankful that we have come so soon to the edge of this occasion, that the western farms, though scarcely set-

tled, have the Chautauqua, which is New England's old rural lecture course; the temperance crusade, which is New England's abolitionism come again; the magazine militant, which is the old Atlantic Monthly combined with the Free-Soil Newspaper under a new dress, and educational reform, which is the Yankee school-house made glorious.

All these, and more, electrify the farmlands. Things are in that ferment where many-sided Life and Thought are born.

Because our West and South are richer and broader and deeper than New England, so much more worth while will our work be. We will come nearer to repeating the spirit of the best splendors of the old Italian villages than to multiplying the prunes and prisms of Boston.

The mystery-seeking, beauty-serving followers of Poe in their very revolt from democracy will serve it well. The Pan-worshipping disciples of Whitman will in the end be, perhaps, more useful brothers of the

176 THE GOSPEL OF BEAUTY

White Christ than all our coming saints. And men will not be infatuated by the written and spoken word only, as in New England. Every art shall have the finest devotion.

Already in this more tropical California, this airier Colorado, this black-soiled Illinois, in Georgia, with her fire-hearted tradition of chivalry and her new and most romantic prosperity, men have learned to pray to the God of the blossoming world, men have learned to pray to the God of Beauty. They meditate upon His ways. They have begun to sing.

As of old, their thoughts and songs begin with the land, and go directly back to the land. Their tap-roots are deep as those of the alfalfa. A new New England is coming, a New England of ninety million souls! An artistic Renaissance is coming. An America is coming such as was long ago prophesied in Emerson's address on the

THE END OF THE ROAD 177

American Scholar. This by faith, and a study of the signs, we proclaim!

PROCLAMATION

*Of the New Village, and the New Country
Community, as Distinct from the Village*

THIS is a year of bumper crops, of harvesting festivals. Through the mists of the happy waning year, a new village rises, and the new country community, in visions revealed to the rejoicing heart of faith.

And yet it needs no vision to see them. Walking across this land I have found them, little ganglions of life, promise of thousands more. The next generation will be that of the eminent village. The son of the farmer will be no longer dazzled and destroyed by the fires of the metropolis. He will travel, but only for what he can bring back. Just as his father sends half-way

178 THE GOSPEL OF BEAUTY

across the continent for good corn, or melon-seed, so he will make his village famous by transplanting and growing this idea or that. He will make it known for its pottery or its processions, its philosophy or its peacocks, its music or its swans, its golden roofs or its great union cathedral of all faiths. There are a thousand miscellaneous achievements within the scope of the great-hearted village. Our agricultural land to-day holds the ploughboys who will bring these benefits. I have talked to these boys. I know them. I have seen their gleaming eyes.

And the lonely country neighborhood, as distinct from the village, shall make itself famous. There are river valleys that will be known all over the land for their tall men and their milk-white maidens, as now for their well-bred horses. There are mountain lands that shall cultivate the tree of knowledge, as well as the apple-tree. There are sandy tracts that shall constantly ripen red and golden citrus fruit, but as well, philoso-

THE END OF THE ROAD 179

phers comforting as the moon, and strengthening as the sun.

These communities shall have their proud circles. They shall have families joined hand in hand, to the end that new blood and new thoughts be constantly brought in, and no good force or leaven be lost. The country community shall awaken illustrious. This by faith, and a study of the signs, we proclaim!

PROCLAMATION

Welcoming the Talented Children of the Soil

BECAUSE of their closeness to the earth, the men on the farms increase in stature and strength.

And for this very reason a certain proportion of their children are being born with a finer strength. They are being born with all this power concentrated in their nerves.

180 THE GOSPEL OF BEAUTY

They have the magnificent thoughts that might stir the stars in their courses, were they given voice.

Yea, in almost every ranch-house is born one flower-like girl or boy, a stranger among the brothers and sisters. Welcome, and a thousand welcomes, to these fairy changelings! They will make our land lovely. Let all of us who love God give our hearts to these His servants. They are born with eyes that weep themselves blind, unless there is beauty to look upon. They are endowed with souls that are self-devouring, unless they be permitted to make rare music; with a desire for truth that will make them mad as the old prophets, unless they be permitted to preach and pray and praise God in their own fashion, each establishing his own dream visibly in the world.

The land is being jewelled with talented children, from Maine to California: souls dewy as the grass, eyes wondering and passionate, lips that tremble. Though they be

THE END OF THE ROAD 181

born in hovels, they have slender hands, seemingly lost amid the heavy hands. They have hands that give way too soon amid the bitter days of labor, but are everlastingly patient with the violin, or chisel, or brush, or pen.

All these children as a sacred charge are appearing, coming down upon the earth like manna. Yet many will be neglected as the too-abundant mulberry, that is left upon the trees. Many will perish like the wild strawberries of Kansas, cut down by the roadside with the weeds. Many will be looked upon like an over-abundant crop of apples, too cheap to be hauled to market, often used as food for the beasts. There will be a great slaughter of the innocents, more bloody than that of Herod of old. But there will be a desperate hardy remnant, adepts in all the conquering necromancy of agricultural Song and democratic Craftsmanship. They will bring us our new time in its completeness.

182 THE GOSPEL OF BEAUTY

This by fáith, and a study of the signs,
we proclaim!

PROCLAMATION

*Of the Coming of Religion, Equality and
Beauty*

IN OUR new day, so soon upon us, for the first time in the history of Democracy, art and the church shall be hand in hand and equally at our service. Neither craftsmanship nor prayer shall be purely aristocratic any more, nor at war with each other, nor at war with the State. The priest, the statesman and the singer shall discern one another's work more perfectly and give thanks to God.

Even now our best churches are blossoming in beauty. Our best political life, whatever the howlers may say, is tending toward equality, beauty and holiñess.

Political speech will cease to turn only upon the price of grain, but begin consider-

ing the price of cross-roads fountains and people's palaces. Our religious life will no longer trouble itself with the squabbles of orthodoxy. It will give us the outdoor choral procession, the ceremony of dedicating the wheat-field or the new-built private house to God. That politician who would benefit the people will not consider all the world wrapped up in the defence or destruction of a tariff schedule. He will serve the public as did Pericles, with the world's greatest dramas. He will rebuild the local Acropolis. He will make his particular Athens rule by wisdom and philosophy, not trade alone. Our crowds shall be audiences, not hurrying mobs; dancers, not brawlers; observers, not restless curiosity-seekers. Our mobs shall become assemblies and our assemblies religious; devout in a subtle sense, equal in privilege and courtesy, delicate of spirit, a perfectly rounded democracy.

All this shall come through the services of three kinds of men in wise coöperation: the

priests, the statesmen and the artists. Our priests shall be religious men like St. Francis, or John Wesley, or General Booth, or Cardinal Newman. They shall be many types, but supreme of their type.

Our statesmen shall find their exemplars and their inspiration in Washington, Jefferson and Lincoln, as all good Americans devoutly desire.

But even these cannot ripen the land without the work of men as versatile as William Morris or Leonardo. Our artists shall fuse the work of these other workers, and give expression to the whole cry and the whole weeping and rejoicing of the land. We shall have Shelleys with a heart for religion, Ruskins with a comprehension of equality.

Religion, equality and beauty! By these America shall come into a glory that shall justify the yearning of the sages for her perfection, and the prophecies of the poets, when she was born in the throes of Valley Forge.

THE END OF THE ROAD 185

*This, by faith, and a study of the signs,
we proclaim!*

EPILOGUE

[*Written to all young lovers about to set up homes
of their own—but especially to those of some
far-distant day, and those of my home-village*]

Lovers, O lovers, listen to my call.

Give me kind thoughts. I woo you on my knees.

Lovers, pale lovers, when the wheat grows tall,

When willow trees are Eden's incense trees:—

I would be welcome as the rose in flower

Or busy bird in your most secret fane.

I would be read in your transcendent hour

When book and rhyme seem for the most part vain.

I would be read, the while you kiss and pray.

I would be read, ere the betrothal ring

Circles the slender finger and you say

Words out of Heaven, while your pulses sing.

O lovers, be my partisans and build

Each home with a great fire-place as is meet.

When there you stand, with royal wonder filled,

In bridal peace, and comradeship complete,

186 THE GOSPEL OF BEAUTY

While each dear heart beats like a fairy drum—

Then burn a new-ripe wheat-sheaf in my name.

Out of the fire my spirit-bread shall come

And my soul's gospel swirl from that red flame.





